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# OPIATE FLOWS THROUGH NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

A Threat Assessment

April 2012



**OPIATE FLOWS THROUGH NORTHERN  
AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA:  
A THREAT ASSESSMENT**



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## GLOSSARY

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<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AGE</b>	Anti-Government Elements
<b>AOTP</b>	Afghan Opiate Trade Project
<b>AREU</b>	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
<b>BCP</b>	Border Crossing Point
<b>BOMCA</b>	Border Management Programme for Central Asia
<b>CAREC</b>	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
<b>CARICC</b>	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre
<b>CJTF</b>	Criminal Justice Task Force
<b>CNPA</b>	Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CSTO</b>	Collective Security Treaty Organization
<b>DCA</b>	Drug Control Agency
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EurAsEc</b>	Eurasian Economic Community
<b>FDCS</b>	Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation

<b>GBAO</b>	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>IMU</b>	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>ROCA</b>	Regional Office for Central Asia
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
<b>SSDC</b>	State Service on Drug Control (Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan)
<b>TIR</b>	Transports Internationaux Routiers (International Road Transport)
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDSS</b>	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development



## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the illicit trade of opiates along the Northern route from northern Afghanistan to Central Asia up to the borders of the Russian Federation. It has been organized in three sections. The first section begins by addressing the dynamics of trafficking in northern Afghanistan, including the groups involved, the volumes of opiate flows and opiate consumption, as well as the share that southern Afghanistan production takes in Northern route trafficking. A second section explores trafficking dynamics through Central Asia, including the methods involved and the groups managing the trade. Lastly, the final section briefly analyzes the regional capacity to respond to the threat of Afghan opiates. For the purposes of this study, ‘northern Afghanistan’ refers to both north Afghanistan and north-east Afghanistan, following the regional grouping of provinces used in the UNODC annual Opium Poppy Survey. The north Afghanistan region consists of the provinces of Baghlan, Samangan, Faryab, Sari-pul, Jawzjan, Bamyan and Balkh, while north-east Afghanistan consists of Kunduz, Badakhshan and Takhar provinces.

**Map 1: Northern Afghanistan**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.





## KEY FINDINGS

- In order to meet demand for illicit opiates supplied by the Northern route in 2010, 1000 tons in opium equivalents were required to transit or be produced in northern Afghanistan; however, sources which supply this demand remain unclear.
- Opium production in northern Afghanistan can account for very little of this supply requirement. Regional opium production has averaged 60 tons annually since 2007, leaving a supply gap of more than 900 tons in opium equivalents and requiring imports from other producing regions of Afghanistan and/or the use of existing local opiate stocks from earlier production in northern Afghanistan between 2005 and 2007.
- Northern Afghanistan sources heroin mostly from the southern and eastern parts of the country. The low volume of seizures heading northward highlights weaknesses in law enforcement manning these routes.
- Surprisingly, there is more evidence of opium flows from the largely poppy-free north than from the opium-rich south. In 2010-2011, several seizures of opium were reported en route from north to south, but hardly any seizures were made traveling in the opposite direction.
- More than 65 per cent of 2010 opiate consumption in Afghanistan is accounted for by regions with little or virtually no opium production, namely northern and central Afghanistan. By contrast, southern Afghanistan consumes the least but produces the most opiates.
- Opium cultivation is likely to reappear in northern Afghanistan in order to replenish dwindling stocks. Otherwise, larger opiate supplies will be required from other regions of Afghanistan, notably from the opium-rich south, to compensate for the sustained low opium production in the north.
- Most internal opiate routes converge on Afghanistan's capital, Kabul. The city is the key node connecting the various opiate producing regions of Afghanistan.
- The value of domestic and export sales of illicit opiates in northern Afghanistan was estimated to be close to US\$ 400 million in 2010.
- Unlike in southern Afghanistan, Taliban and other Anti-Government Elements (AGE) are apparently not taxing the opium trade with any regularity in northern Afghanistan. There are, however, specific locations in northern Afghanistan bordering Tajikistan where AGE appear to be partially funding their operations through the drug economy, and in turn protect it from interdiction.
- Northern Afghanistan is one of the safest regions of the country, but it seizes very little opiates relative to its importance in processing and trafficking for the Northern route. Crime groups controlling the trade in this region also appear to operate with a high degree of impunity. Corruption rather than insecurity appears to be the main corollary to high-volume opiate trafficking in northern Afghanistan.
- The flow of opiates from northern Afghanistan into Central Asia has not lessened, but Central Asian seizure volumes dropped in 2010 despite increased capacity and relatively stable borders.

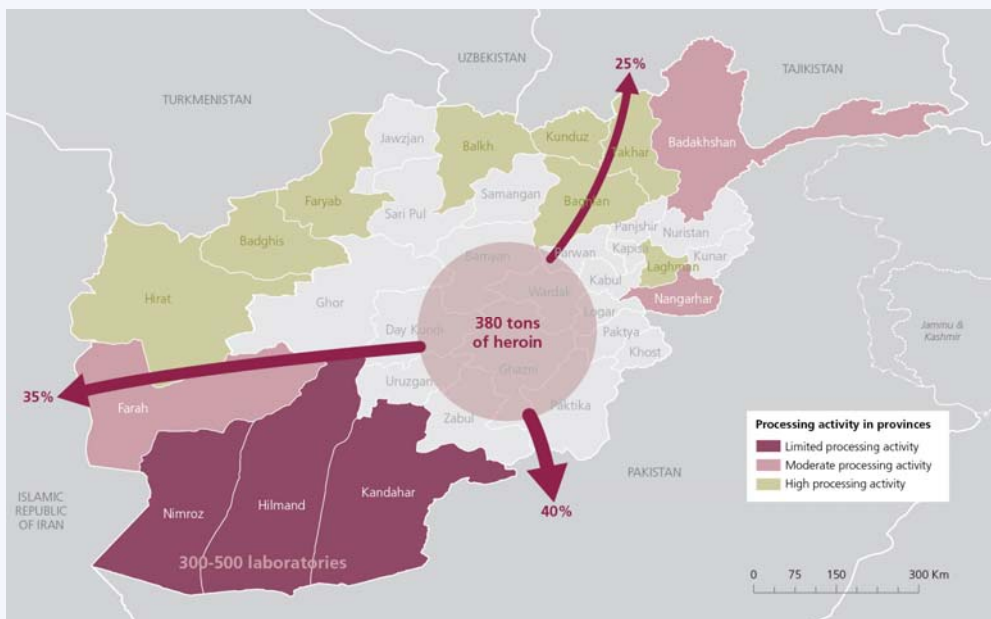
- In 2010, it is estimated that approximately 85 per cent of the opiate flow through Central Asia, passed through Tajikistan.
- There are various supply chain structures in Central Asia. Trafficking through Turkmenistan appears to feed the Balkan route into the Islamic Republic of Iran rather than the Northern route. Turkmenistan is also unique in Central Asia as a destination country for Balkan route opiates.
- Traffickers increasingly utilize Central Asian railways to transport opiates to the Russian Federation and beyond. The size of some loads detected in 2010 suggests that traffickers are operating with a heightened confidence level. Massive seizures of hashish in containers destined to North America are a confirmation that railroad trafficking is also linked to transcontinental trafficking.
- The Customs union agreement between Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Belarus can be misused, as traffickers may opt to re-route opiate deliveries to Europe through the Northern route, as opposed to the traditional Balkan route. There are plans to extend the Customs union agreement to other states such as Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, and possibly Tajikistan.
- Countering the flow of drugs is complicated by difficulties in co-ordinating efforts between national agencies within Central Asia and between this region and Afghanistan. This is reflected in limited intelligence sharing along lines of supply.
- Drug trafficking and organized crime are sources of conflict in Kyrgyzstan and potentially in the region as a whole. The inter-ethnic clashes that occurred in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010 have been used by ethnic Kyrgyz criminal groups to assume predominance over ethnic Uzbek criminal groups and to control the drug routes through this part of Kyrgyzstan.
- Rising militancy has been reported across Central Asia, but there are no observed direct connections between extremist groups and drug trafficking. The preoccupation with combating insurgents in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan does, however, hinder counter-narcotics efforts by, at least partly, shifting the focus of law enforcement away from drug control.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010 an estimated 25 per cent of the 380 tons of heroin manufactured in Afghanistan - some 90 tons- was trafficked northwards through Central Asia via the Northern route and onward to the Russian Federation. The 90-ton total includes heroin consumed within Central Asia and the Russian Federation, as well as heroin seized by law enforcement or trafficked onward. More than three quarters of this amount are destined for the Russian market, with a small portion (approximately 3-4 tons) continuing to eastern and northern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in 2010 between 35 and 40 tons of raw opium were trafficked through northern Afghanistan towards Central Asian markets. The entire 2010 opiate demand of the Northern route is required to transit or be produced in northern Afghanistan

**Map 2: Afghan heroin production and distribution of exports, 2010**



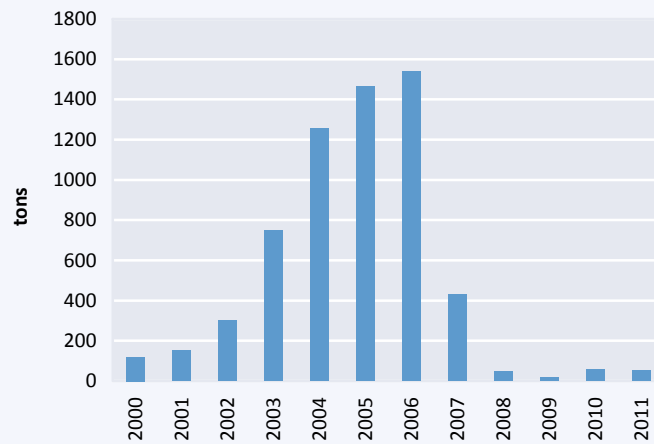
Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

<sup>1</sup> The Global Afghan Opiate Trade: A Threat Assessment, 2011, UNODC

In addition to the demand from these markets, a portion of Afghan opiates<sup>2</sup> is destined for Afghan consumers. The growing local demand across Afghanistan can affect and sometimes debilitate entire villages. There are an estimated 107,000 users in northern Afghanistan, consuming some 85 tons of low-quality opiates (mostly opium) annually.

Taking northern Afghanistan consumption into account, overall opiate demand reaches nearly 1,000 tons in opium equivalents, vastly exceeding this region’s opium production in recent years. In 2010, the opium production of northern Afghanistan totalled 56 tons, an amount insufficient even to supply its own local market.

**Figure 1: Total opium production in northern Afghanistan (2000-2011)**



Source: UNODC

There are an estimated 40-50 active heroin laboratories in northern Afghanistan, notably in Badakhshan province. Each laboratory can produce an average of one ton of heroin annually and requires two basic inputs - opium and acetic anhydride. While the source of acetic anhydride is eastern Afghanistan, the source of opium remains unclear.

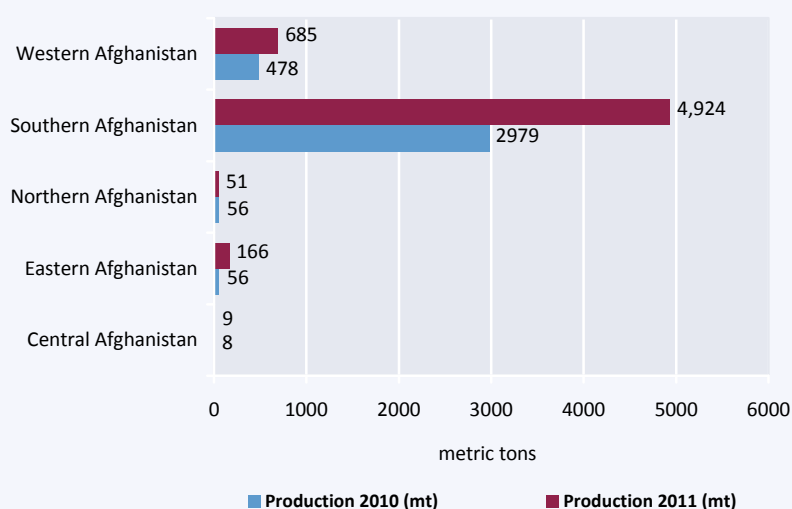
An obvious assumption would be production in the southern or western regions of the country, but there is insufficient evidence of significant south-to-north or west-to-north opium trafficking in the form of seizures or intelligence reports. There is also a disincentive for southern or western traffickers to move opium northward, given that in 2010 opium prices in northern Afghanistan were the lowest in the country.

<sup>2</sup> Opiates are substances derived from opium poppy, such as morphine and codeine, including their derivatives, such as heroin.





**Figure 2: Opium production in Afghanistan by region 2010-2011**



Source: UNODC

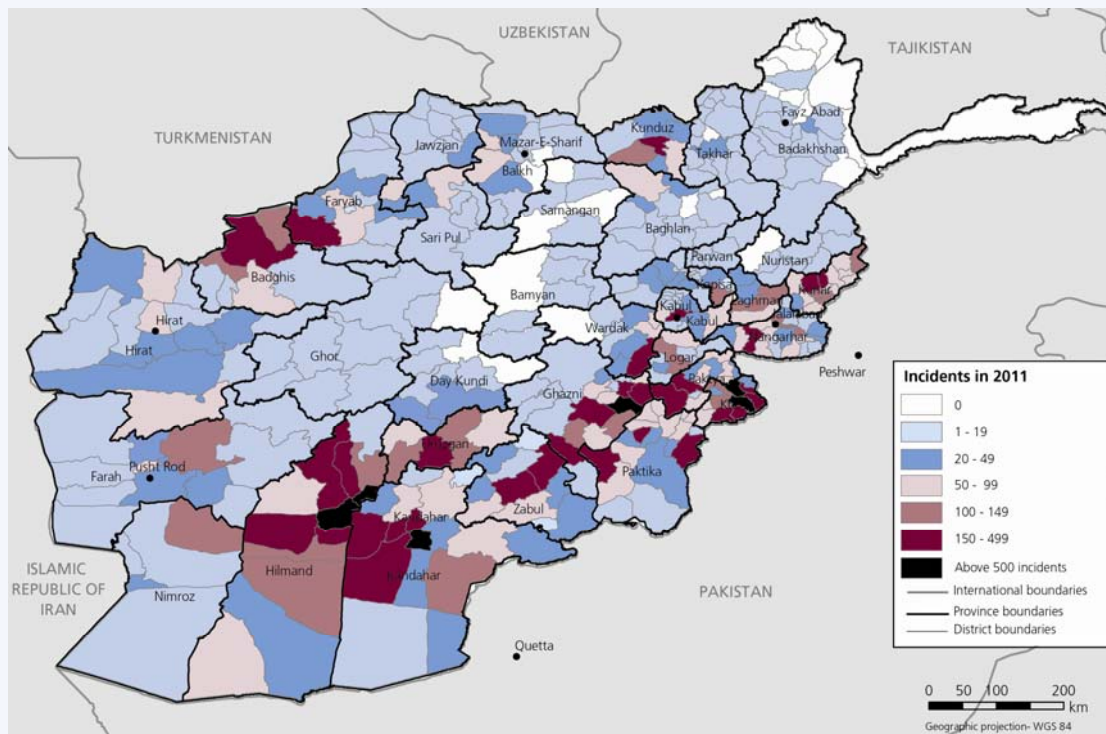
Stocks of opium in northern Afghanistan are another possibility and there is both quantitative and qualitative data to support this hypothesis. Based on production data from previous years, these stockpiles are likely to have run out by 2012, heralding renewed production in northern Afghanistan to replenish inventories. An alternative scenario is a significant increase in opium supplies from other regions of Afghanistan.

However, the presence of opium stocks and the limited number of detected opium imports are unlikely to account alone for the Northern route demand of 90 tons of heroin. This suggests that large volumes of heroin are being trafficked northward from other regions of Afghanistan. The logistics of these operations are insufficiently known due to limited seizure data, but the information available points to heroin inputs from the south (Hilmand and Kandahar provinces) and east (Nangarhar province) to northern Afghanistan and further to Central Asia.

This study estimates that approximately half of the Northern route's heroin demand is produced in northern Afghanistan laboratories mostly from existing opium stocks. The remainder is thought to be sourced from other regions of Afghanistan. According to the region, the groups managing this trade depend to varying extents on a mixture of ethnic/tribal affiliations, political alignments, 'pure' business dealings and long-term friendships.

While northern Afghanistan remains one of the most stable regions of the country, security has deteriorated and a progressive infiltration by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda-linked Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has been reported since 2009. AGEs have established two main areas of activity in northern Afghanistan: one front in the provinces of Kunduz and Takhar bordering Tajikistan, and a second front spreading northward in the provinces of Badghis and Faryab bordering Turkmenistan. Along with narcotics, insecurity has spilled over the border with IMU and other insurgents crossing into Tajikistan – and further to Kyrgyzstan- waging a low-level conflict in both countries in 2009-2011.

**Map 3: Security incidents in Afghanistan, 2011**



Source: Adapted from UNODC security incidents map. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Some observers see the insurgent activity in northern Afghanistan and Central Asia as the result of the IMU re-asserting control over drug routes. So far, UNODC has not seen strong evidence of current insurgent involvement in opiate trafficking through Central Asia but, at the very least, terrorist acts and incursions are putting an additional burden on law enforcement and shifting resources away from counter-narcotics.

It should also not be excluded that members of the IMU or other Taliban-linked groups would seek to acquire a share of the Central Asian opiate market as recent media reports from the Russian Federation seem to suggest.<sup>3</sup> In Afghanistan, the involvement of Taliban insurgents in the drug trade is evident, particularly in the south, and has been detailed in previous UNODC research.

However, excessively focusing on insurgents' linkages with the drug trade risks obscuring the deeper involvement of corrupt government officials in the Afghan opiate trade. In northern Afghanistan, many actors who in previous years had been involved in opiate trafficking have now become public officials, politicians and businessmen.<sup>4</sup> Some of these stakeholders continue to be involved in drug trafficking, making high-level corruption another important cog in the large wheel of organized crime in Afghanistan (see figure below). Similarly, large parts of the political and law enforcement establishment in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are seriously undermined by the involvement in the drug trade. As a matter of fact, all of Central Asia is concerned by drug trade-related corruption and the problem extends far beyond this transit region into consumption markets.

<sup>3</sup> Suspected Islamic extremists detained in Moscow, Interfax, 3 December 2011

<sup>4</sup> Mark Shaw, "Drug trafficking and the development of organized crime in post-Taliban Afghanistan", UNODC, 2005



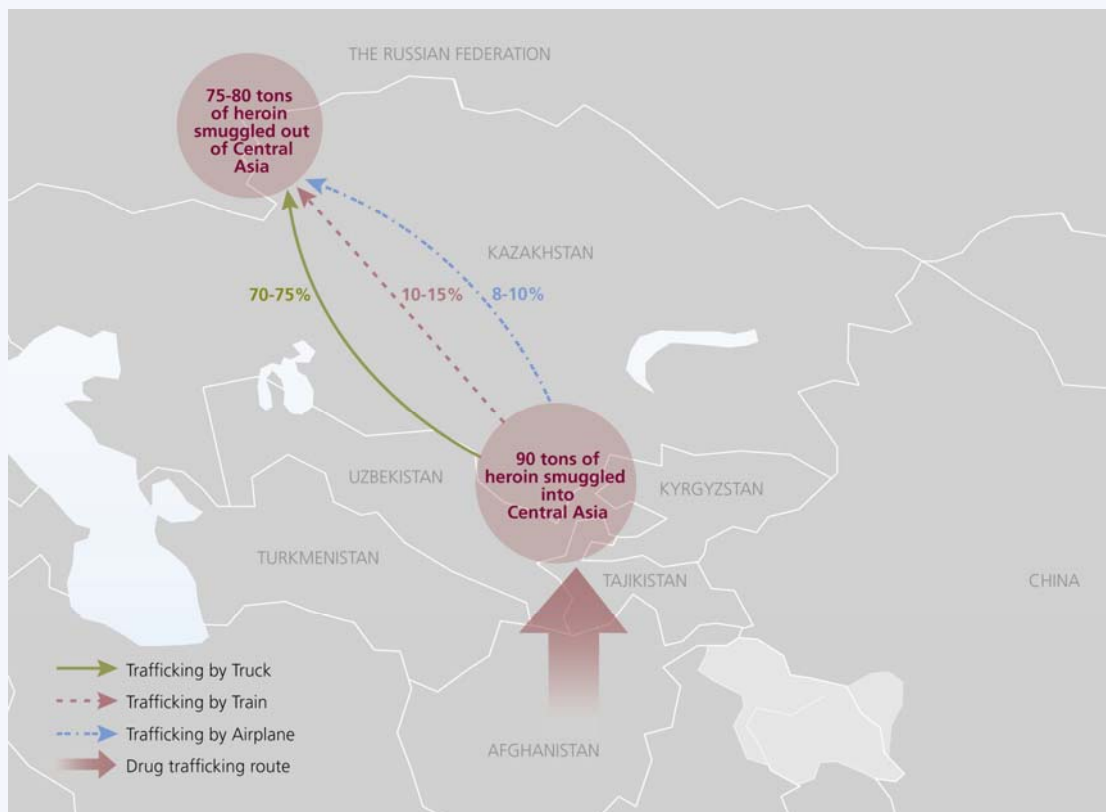
**Figure 3: The opiate trafficking mechanism in Afghanistan**



*Source: UNODC*

The bulk of heroin is trafficked using routes in the Afghan provinces bordering Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in order of importance. While the task of border management with Afghanistan is clearly complicated by cross-border ethnic or family ties, these are not the main facilitating factor in enabling trafficking operations. In fact, a look at the ethnic dynamics at play in some key bordering areas of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan paints a different picture. Depending on the border area, drug routes seem to be determined by a combination of linguistic links, geographic proximity and available opportunities.

Despite improvements to customs controls and the large-scale coverage of border guards, the majority of Northern route opiates continues to flow nearly uninterrupted into Tajikistan. Both large, well-organized groups and small entrepreneurs appear to be engaged in trafficking. Entrenched corruption and the strength of criminal organizations in Tajikistan make this flow largely invisible relative to its importance. Trafficking into Tajikistan, or Central Asia in general, is not always smooth. The lethal exchanges between traffickers and the Tajik border guards in particular, as well as the Turkmen and Uzbek border guards, are a testimony to the insecurity associated with cross-border smuggling. Beyond the Central Asian border, armed confrontation between traffickers and law enforcement is rare and generally confined to the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border.

**Map 4: Trafficking flows on the Northern route by mode of transportation (2010)**

Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

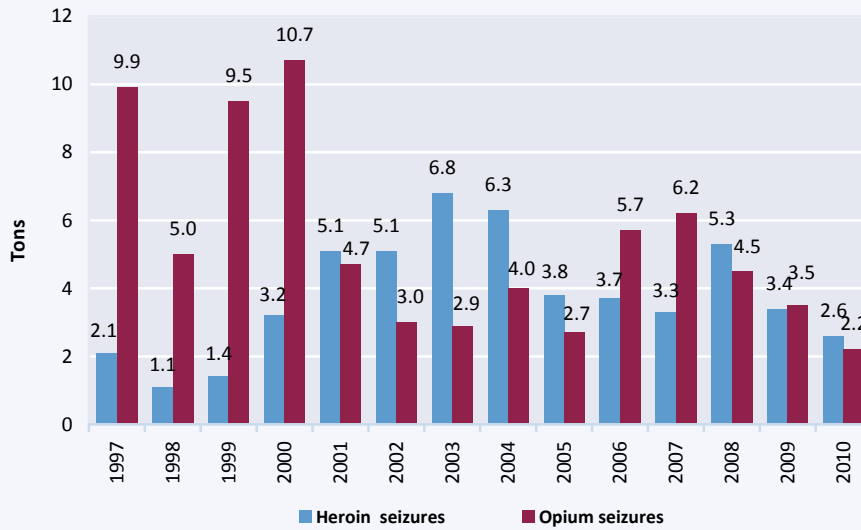
Although it borders Afghanistan, Uzbekistan receives the bulk of its heroin via Tajikistan before the drug flow continues onto Kazakhstan. Trafficking mostly occurs by road, although increasing seizures along regional train lines indicate that traffickers are diversifying their methods of operation. However, Kyrgyzstan is probably the preferred route for Tajik opiates given the country's current situation of instability and ease of crossing into the mostly uncontrolled southern border with Tajikistan. The widespread corruption along the routes from Tajikistan into southern Kyrgyzstan translates into a relatively short supply chain in terms of number of actors involved.

In 2010, an estimated 70-75 tons of heroin reached Kazakhstan mainly from Kyrgyzstan and, to a lesser extent, from Uzbekistan. Relatively little heroin is seized in Kazakhstan, suggesting that the route is exceedingly well organized. Trade flows with its Central Asian neighbours are expanding, which may add to the existing challenge of guarding a 3,600 km-long border.

Within Central Asia, Turkmenistan has a peripheral role for the Northern route. It has rather developed into a branch of the Balkan route that flows from the Islamic Republic of Iran into Turkey and Europe. Seizures of opiates are down across Central Asia and have reached their lowest level in over a decade.



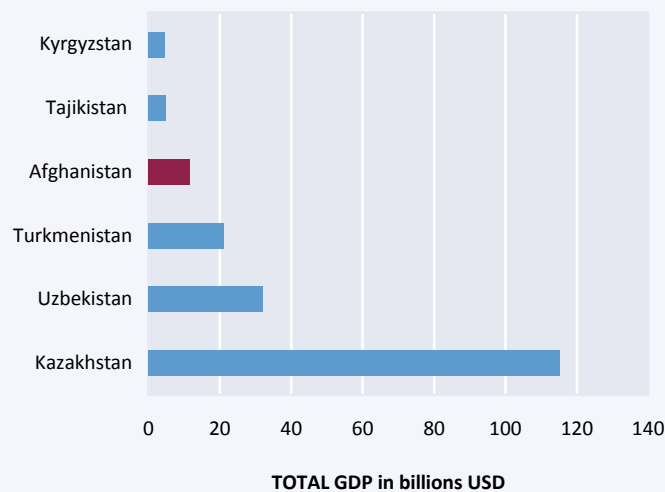
**Figure 4: Opiate seizure trends in Central Asia, 1997-2010**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

The profits generated from the opiate trade have a serious impact on state and society. UNODC estimates that in 2010 drug traffickers in Central Asia made a net profit of US\$1.4 billion from the sale of transiting opiates. Such staggering amounts are comparable with and can destabilize the vulnerable economies of Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. At the micro level, poverty in these countries leaves many -including low-paid local officials- with few viable avenues for economic advancement. At the macro level, struggling economies in the region have limited resources to devote to drug control. However, poverty is but one factor facilitating the illicit opiate trade. For instance, the economic development experienced by Kazakhstan is inversely proportional to its interdiction efficiency, which is the lowest in Central Asia.

**Figure 5: GDP in Central Asia and Afghanistan (2010)**



Source: World Bank estimates (2010)

Effective regional cooperation is one of the best ways for governments to directly address transnational threats. Yet, while Central Asia and Afghanistan are becoming increasingly

integrated economically, counter-narcotics cooperation is proceeding at a slower pace. This is due to complicating issues of trust combined with disputes on border demarcation and control over natural resources. Ultimately, however, governments in the region have historically found ways to cooperate when their strategic interests are essentially aligned.

Countries in the region have already agreed, in principle, to cooperate on counter-narcotics with the establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC)<sup>5</sup>. While this is a fundamental step, some countries are not making use of available cooperation mechanisms through CARICC; others are still developing their border security policy largely in isolation. The resulting lack of professional trust makes it difficult to create relationships strong enough to support effective cooperation. In welcome contrast, in recent years Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan have been deepening their cooperation and undertaking joint operations. This best practice should be emulated by other countries in the region.

At present, organized crime groups are the clear beneficiaries of this inefficient cooperation, as well as the corruption which hinders its very development. There are, however, encouraging signs that corruption is being addressed and in some cases tackled in Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. That said, the pervasive nature of the drug trade requires additional efforts to ensure that all levels of corruption are rooted out. In 2010, the Afghan Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) charged 35 public officials for drug trafficking.<sup>6</sup> While these convictions are very encouraging and send a signal that the culture of impunity is not a foregone conclusion, the State needs to continue setting higher targets.

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<sup>5</sup> Established in 2005, the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) was created to promote regional cooperation in the field of combating illicit drug trafficking and other types of organized crime. It is intended to serve as a regional focal point for the communication and transmission of information in “real time” on cross-border crime. The seven Member States of CARICC are the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.cjtf.gov.af/English/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=62](http://www.cjtf.gov.af/English/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=62)



## I. OPIATE SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

The Northern route developed in the 1990s, opening new markets for opiate suppliers in Afghanistan. The first seizures were reported in the mid-1990s in Central Asia, heralding an explosion of opiate use across the newly-formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Russian Federation is now one of the largest markets for Afghan opiates, consuming nearly one fifth of total Afghan heroin output in recent years.<sup>7</sup>

This section examines where this opiate supply is sourced within Afghanistan. It considers whether it is produced in northern Afghanistan or transported through this region from the other main opiate processing parts of the country. It begins by addressing local consumption and its potential sources and then studies the dynamics of production and trafficking in balancing with Northern route requirements.

### Consumption in northern Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the combined conditions of poverty, war and a massive supply of heroin and opium have generated an obvious risk of widespread drug addiction.<sup>8</sup> According to the UNODC drug use survey, in 2005 there were a total of 202,000 opiate users in Afghanistan. More than a third of estimated users (70,000) were located in northern Afghanistan, followed by central Afghanistan with 61,000 users in 2005.<sup>9</sup>

A more recent UNODC survey (2009) indicated that figures nearly doubled in central Afghanistan (115,000 users), as well as northern Afghanistan where the number of users increased by more than half (107,000). Across the country, the total number of estimated opiate users was 353,000 in 2009, pointing to a 59 per cent increase. The growing number of heroin users is especially worrying. Between 2005 and 2009, the total number of heroin users

<sup>7</sup> UNODC, "The Global Afghan Opiate Trade: A Threat Assessment", July 2011

<sup>8</sup> Another determining factor is the flood of Afghan refugees returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran, many of whom became heroin addicts there. Among opium and heroin users, up to 40 per cent initiated their opiate use in Iran, UNODC drug survey Afghanistan, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The central region consists of Ghazni, Khost, Logar, Paktika, Paktya, Parwan, Panjshir, Wardak and Kabul. The high number of users in this region can be partly explained by the fact that central Afghanistan -and Kabul in particular- is a major consolidation point for internally trafficked opiates, which has led to a higher risk of spillover into the general population.

increased by 142 per cent (compared to a 52 per cent increase in opium users). At 2.65 per cent, the Afghan opiate prevalence rate is currently the highest in the world.<sup>10</sup> However, this figure may be underestimated in part because of the stigma attached to opiate dependence in Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>

Users in central and northern Afghanistan had a higher rate of injection (20 per cent) than other regions of Afghanistan, increasing -among other factors- the risk for overdose.<sup>12</sup> Injecting drug use is the major source of new HIV infections in Afghanistan, with some of the highest transmission rates found in northern Afghanistan (Mazar-i-Sharif).<sup>13</sup> The harm caused by opiates is not limited to the users but extends to family members. A 2011 study carried out by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) found opiates in the hair samples of more than three quarters of women and children living in homes where opiates were consumed.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1: Total opiate users in 2005 and 2009 in Afghanistan**

Region Years	Opium		Heroin	
	2005	2009	2005	2009
Central Afghanistan	38 733	77 000	22 476	39 000
Eastern Afghanistan	9 101	25 000	1 124	15 000
Northern Afghanistan	58 188	76 000	11 283	31 000
Southern Afghanistan	20 196	23 000	7 526	16 000
Western Afghanistan	26 652	32 000	7 128	19 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 870</b>	<b>233 000</b>	<b>49 537</b>	<b>120 000</b>

Source: UNODC

### Consumption volumes

Although lacking systematic data collection on yearly opiate consumption levels per user, fieldwork carried out by the UNODC Afghan Opiate Trade Project staff and information provided by the Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey offer some qualitative data that can be used as the basis to formulate an estimate. These indirect methods and the figures they produce have limitations and should be viewed only as indicative.

According to these informal surveys, an average opium user in Afghanistan is estimated to use around 1 kg of opium per year. The average annual heroin use is estimated at around 45

<sup>10</sup> World Drug Report 2011, UNODC

<sup>11</sup> Afghanistan Drug Use Survey, UNODC, 2009, p.4

<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan Drug Use Survey, UNODC, 2009

<sup>13</sup> According to the IBBS (Integrated Biological-Behavioral Surveillance) conducted in three cities (i.e. Kabul, Hirat and Mazar-e-sharif) in 2009, the HIV prevalence among injecting drug users was estimated at 1-18 per cent. However, there are wide variations in HIV prevalence among the cities: 1 per cent, 3 per cent and 18 per cent in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul and Hirat respectively. See HIV/AIDS in Afghanistan, World Bank, February 2011, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTANEXTN/Resources/305984-1297184305854/HIVAIDSbriefAFFeb2011.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> "Opium Smoke: the study of second-and third-hand exposure in women and children of Afghanistan", Brief Technical Report, US Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), 2011





grams (in equivalents of high quality heroin of 70 per cent purity).<sup>15</sup> Given that in Afghanistan street-level heroin has an average purity of 5-10 per cent, a heroin user would consume an average annual amount of 315-630 grams of street-level heroin.<sup>16</sup> These estimates are in line with the consumption patterns observed in other countries in the region.

In 2009, out of 353,000 opiate users, some 233,000 were estimated to be opium users and the remaining 120,000 heroin users.<sup>17</sup> Extrapolating from these estimates, in 2009 users in Afghanistan consumed an estimated total of 233 tons of opium and 5.5 tons of heroin. When converting heroin into opium equivalents, the total consumption for 2009 was approximately 271 tons of opium.<sup>18</sup>

Further extrapolation from the regional consumption breakdowns provided by the 2009 UNODC survey led to approximately 76 tons of opium (33 per cent) out of a total of 233 tons of raw opium consumed in northern Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Turning to heroin use, northern Afghanistan accounts for 26 per cent (1.4 tons) of national consumption. These consumption estimations will be assumed valid for 2010, in the absence of an Afghan drug use survey after 2009. Approximately 7.5 per cent of the 3,600 tons of opium produced in 2010 was dedicated to local opiate use. The rest was exported to markets worldwide.

In order to meet the growing opiate demand in northern Afghanistan, local production in this region would seem like an obvious choice. However, opium production actually decreased sharply in northern Afghanistan after 2007, a trend inversely proportional to the increasing consumption experienced between 2005 and 2009.

**Table 2: Total opium consumption and production in Afghanistan in 2010, by region**

Region	Opium consumption (tons)	Heroin consumption (tons)	Total consumption in opium equivalent (tons)	Opium production (tons)
Central Afghanistan	77	1.8	89	8
Eastern Afghanistan	25	0.7	30	56
Northern Afghanistan	76	1.4	86	56
Southern Afghanistan	23	0.7	28	2 984
Western Afghanistan	32	0.9	38	476
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>5 835</b>

Source: UNODC

<sup>15</sup> This figure is not purity adjusted.

<sup>16</sup> In order to provide a standard comparison between supply and demand figures, all the calculations throughout the report are made in high purity (70 per cent).

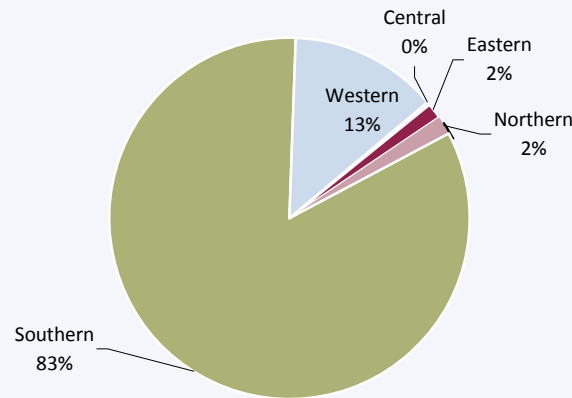
<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan Drug Use Survey, UNODC, 2009

<sup>18</sup> One kilogram of heroin can be considered the equivalent of 5-10 kg of opium, depending on its purity and the production process. For local consumption, a 7:1 ratio is used on the assumption that brown heroin is the most common type used in local consumption.

<sup>19</sup> An estimated 77 tons were consumed in central Afghanistan.

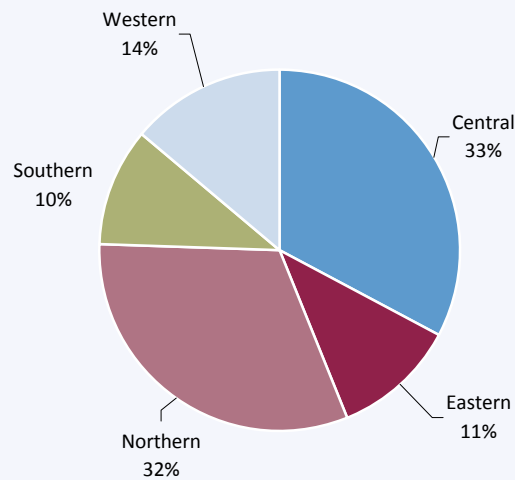
As indicated in the above table, estimated opiate consumption levels (in opium equivalent) in regions like northern and central Afghanistan are significantly lower than production in those same regions. Approximately 65 per cent of opiate consumption in Afghanistan takes place in regions with virtually no opium production, namely northern and central Afghanistan, leaving supply gaps. Conversely, the southern part of the country consumes the least but produces the most opiates.

**Figure 6: Regional shares of Afghan opium production, 2010**



Source: UNODC

**Figure 7: Regional shares of the Afghan opiate consumer market, 2010**



Source: UNODC

### What is the source of supply?

In addition to hosting local markets, northern Afghanistan is the gateway through which opiates enter the Northern route. In total, 90 tons of heroin and 35-40 tons of opium are estimated to be trafficked annually from northern Afghanistan into Central Asian markets and further to the larger market in the Russian Federation.



## Heroin manufacture

Northern Afghanistan, which is mostly poppy-free, is an important region for heroin manufacture. The manufacturing process mainly concerns white heroin hydrochloride (HCL), in line with the heroin reportedly consumed in Central Asia and the Russian Federation.<sup>20</sup> Once processed, the heroin is measured into 1-kg units and wrapped in paper or placed in cloth bags, usually stamped with an identifying logo.

### Afghan heroin bag with logo (2011)



Source: CNPA

The bulk of the heroin manufacturing takes place in Badakhshan with a few smaller labs and less frequent manufacture<sup>21</sup> in the provinces of Takhar,<sup>22</sup> Kunduz, Baghlan, Faryab and perhaps Balkh.<sup>23</sup> Laboratories in Badakhshan are usually not permanent and some operate in border districts located only a few kilometres from the Tajik border. According to local law enforcement sources and UNODC field research, it is estimated that 40-50 heroin laboratories were active in northern Afghanistan as of 2010.<sup>24</sup> The near-totality of their production is destined for export. Based on UNODC informal surveys, the estimated amount of heroin manufactured per laboratory in northern Afghanistan is on average 1 ton per year.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of these estimates, 45 laboratories (midpoint) could potentially manufacture up to 45 tons of heroin annually or half the estimated Northern route demand of 90 tons.

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<sup>20</sup> A 10:1 ratio is used for conversion from opium to heroin hydrochloride (HCL).

<sup>21</sup> UNODC Mission to Mazar-i-Sharif, interviews with CNPA, UNODC Survey coordinator, CNAT, ABP officials, December 2009

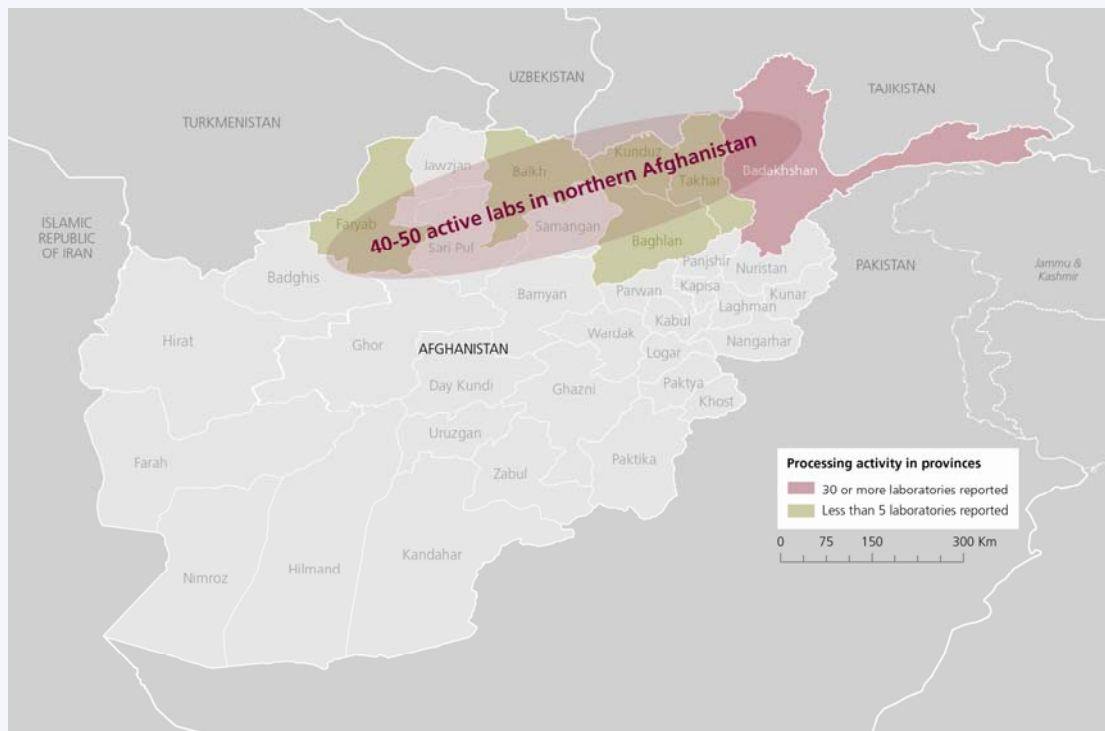
<sup>22</sup> "Drug lab destroyed in Takhar", 23 January 2012, <http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security.html>

<sup>23</sup> These kinds of labs typically employ 3-4 workers and are nearly all mobile facilities. The processing is done in small, makeshift labs, often manned just by a chemist, a few assistants (often drug addicts themselves) and a contingent of guards.

<sup>24</sup> UNODC, "The Global Afghan Opiate Trade: A Threat Assessment", July 2011

<sup>25</sup> UNODC, "The Global Afghan Opiate Trade: A Threat Assessment", July 2011

**Map 5: Reported labs in northern Afghanistan (2010)**



Sources: UNODC, CNPA, UNAMA, ISAF. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**Opium production**

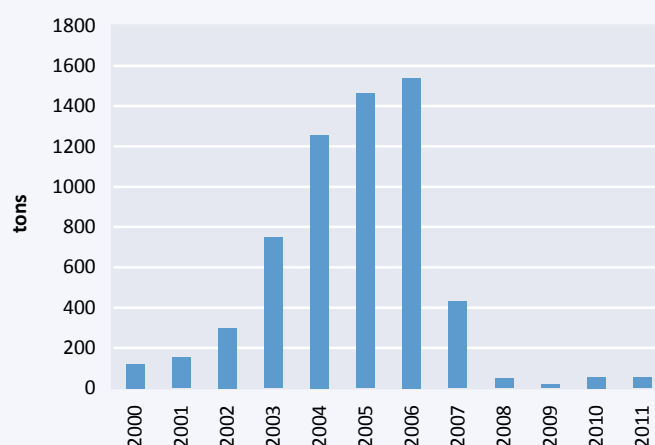
The mere presence of heroin laboratories creates a demand for opium. Manufacturing 45 tons of white heroin would require approximately 400 tons of opium. In 2010 the total opium production in northern Afghanistan was concentrated in Badakhshan and consisted of only 56 tons;<sup>26</sup> an amount insufficient to manufacture even 6 tons of white heroin. This production could cover the estimated 35-40 tons of raw opium demand in Central Asia, but this would leave little for local opiate consumption in northern Afghanistan. On the strong assumption that UNODC opium production estimates are accurate, the last occasion when northern Afghanistan was able to produce enough opium to manufacture 45 tons of heroin was in 2007 (see below figure). Since then, laboratories must either have sourced opium from other regions or must be holding and exploiting opium stocks from previous years. A combination of the two scenarios is plausible. An alternative hypothesis - that all opiates travelling to Central Asia simply transit northern Afghanistan on their way from other regions - would not explain the presence and interdiction of heroin laboratories<sup>27</sup> and acetic anhydride in the region.

<sup>26</sup> Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2011, UNODC

<sup>27</sup> According to CNPA information, two heroin laboratories were interdicted in Badakhshan in 2011; see also "Drug Lab Destroyed In Takhar", Bakhtar News, www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security.html, January 23, 2012



**Figure 8: Total opium production in northern Afghanistan (2000-2011)**



Source: UNODC

As illustrated in the table below, in 2010 northern Afghanistan required around 1,000 tons of opium equivalent (in either heroin or opium form) to meet both local consumption and trafficking demand on the Northern route (this consisting of around 90-ton heroin and 35-40 ton raw opium).

**Table 3: Opium demand estimate (in opium equivalent) for northern Afghanistan, 2010**

	Description	Amount (in tons)
(a)	Total consumption	85
(b')	Total trafficking to Central Asia	850
(c)=(a+b)	Total estimated demand (rounded)	1 000

(\* Totals may not add up due to rounding)

Source: UNODC

Northern Afghanistan was not always poppy-free, as indicated in the table below. Between 2004 and 2006, opium production in northern Afghanistan was significantly higher than the estimated local consumption and trafficking demand of approximately 1,000 tons. Between 2004 and 2010, some 4,800 tons of opium were produced in northern Afghanistan, mostly before 2008. During that same period, a total of 7,000 tons of opium were needed to meet both local demand and opiate trafficking to Central Asia, leaving a supply gap of at least 2,000 tons of opium.

As of 2007, opium production had decreased sharply in the region and all provinces in northern Afghanistan were poppy free in 2009-2010. In 2011, production re-emerged in northern Afghanistan but equates to only a fraction of its previous 2005-2006 production levels.

**Table 4: Opium Production in Afghanistan (tons), 2004-2011**

Region	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Southern Afghanistan	1 346	1 749	3 703	5 745	6 917	6 026	2 979	4 924	33 389
Western Afghanistan	346	685	610	959	655	825	478	685	5243
Eastern Afghanistan	1 190	180	304	1 084	45	21	56	166	3 046
Northern Afghanistan	1256	365	1460	428	48	19	56	51	4781
Central Afghanistan	82	4	8	26	11	0	8	9	148
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 220</b>	<b>4 081</b>	<b>6 085</b>	<b>8 242</b>	<b>7 676</b>	<b>6 891</b>	<b>3 577</b>	<b>5 835</b>	<b>46 607</b>

Source: UNODC

### Stockpiles, a potential supply source.

The excessive opium production that occurred between 2004 and 2006 is not insignificant and under normal circumstances should have resulted in surpluses in the probable form of carry-over stocks by farmers, laboratory owners and traders. Indeed, opium can be kept for several years or even decades without significantly altering its quality.<sup>28</sup> The practice of stocking opium, carried out by traders and farmers in Afghanistan, is well documented across all regions. Specific to northern Afghanistan, research by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) indicates that opium stocks from the overproduction in Badakhshan province in 2005-2006 were held by households “that gradually sold them off in subsequent years”.<sup>29</sup> This is supported by UNODC surveyors in Badakhshan who reported that laboratories in that area were still relying on opium stocks for production as of mid-2008.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it would appear that stocks were indeed used after 2006-2007 to offset reductions in poppy cultivation.

More recent research carried out by AREU in 2011 shows similar findings within current non-cultivating areas in Badakhshan, where “richer households were reportedly still holding stocks of opium and, with the rise in price, were now selling these to outside traders”.<sup>31</sup> Research by UNODC (2010-2011) also indicates the presence of important -albeit dwindling- stocks particularly among Badakhshan opium traders.<sup>32</sup> The breakdown between different actors in the opium chain is as follows:

- Approximately 10-15 per cent of farmers (mainly in Argo, Kisham, Teshkan and Daraym districts) keep on average a modest 10-20 kg of opium in their homes.
- Shopkeepers active in the trade keep around 30-50 kg of opium at their shops.
- Opium traders keep 300-500 kg of opium as stock.

<sup>28</sup> [www.unodc.org/pdf/Alternative%20Development/AD\\_DrugControlInstrument.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Alternative%20Development/AD_DrugControlInstrument.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Adam Pain, “Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan”, AREU, p.12, 2010

<sup>30</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Poppy survey, p.87

<sup>31</sup> Adam Pain, Opium Poppy Strikes Back: The 2011 Return of Opium in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces, AREU, p.15, [www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1116E%20Opium%20Poppy%20Strikes%20Back%20CS%202011.pdf](http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1116E%20Opium%20Poppy%20Strikes%20Back%20CS%202011.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> UNODC mission to Badakhshan, April 2010



Stocks have also been reported elsewhere in northern Afghanistan,<sup>33</sup> including in Balkh province where officers of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) report the presence of enduring stockpiles.<sup>34</sup> Possible indications are the large single seizures of opium in provinces like Balkh that have not produced in several years. In January 2011, 800 kg of opium were seized in the Aqsha district of Balkh province.<sup>35</sup> The previous year, Balkh police seized two full tons of opium during operations carried out in February.<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that seizures of this size in Balkh or elsewhere in northern Afghanistan (notably in Faryab) are not necessarily exceptional events and have been reported consistently since mid-2000. Perhaps more importantly, such seizures are usually shipments in transit from northern Afghanistan towards other regions of the country (as detailed in the next section), indicating that the north may even have enough surplus opium to spare for other opiate producing or consuming regions. Furthermore, farmers in Balkh also continued to report to UNODC prices for both fresh and dry opium in 2011. This, combined with large opium seizures, is surprising given that the province has been declared poppy free since 2006.

On the assumption that stocks exist and have been used, it is likely that these are dwindling or have already dried up as of the time of this writing. Perhaps in response to this, cultivation increased slightly in 2011 and two provinces in northern Afghanistan -Takhar and Kunduz- lost their opium poppy-free status in 2011. A further increase in cultivation may occur in 2012, if only to continue to meet the growing local demand (see previous section). The existence of undetected opium cultivation in northern Afghanistan is also a possibility. If that were the case, smaller opium stocks would be required, but these would still be significant. Whatever the case, stocks are one potential source of supply for processors in northern Afghanistan. The other would be importing opium from other producing regions of the country.

## Trafficking

At the outset, it should be stated that the internal opiate market in Afghanistan is based on demand and that opiates can be trafficked in essentially all directions, making it difficult to draw specific trends. Another important caveat when analyzing internal trafficking is the reliability of seizure data. In general terms, official seizures in Afghanistan do not accurately reflect the quantities of opiates in circulation.<sup>37</sup> This is true anywhere, but particularly in Afghanistan where data collection is still very weak and seizures can be somewhat erratic. Moreover, investigations are rarely undertaken following seizures, making it difficult to ascertain the destination and origin of shipments.

### Is opium trafficked to northern Afghanistan from other regions?

In 2010-2011, in addition to potential stockpiles in northern Afghanistan, the most likely source identified as having the capacity to fill the supply gaps in northern Afghanistan was southern Afghanistan.

<sup>33</sup> Katarina Larsson, Provincial survey of Balkh, Jowzjan, Samangan and Saripul, November 2008

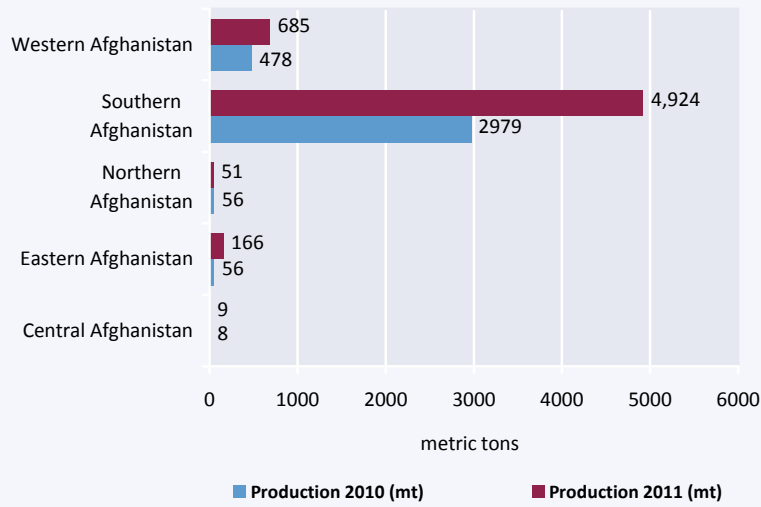
<sup>34</sup> Interview, CNPA, Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, December 2009

<sup>35</sup> CNPA database; according to news reports the total seizures in Balkh were 197 kg of heroin, 1,403 kg of opium and 596 kg of hashish. See also [www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/01/16/119-rebels-killed-balkh-operation](http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/01/16/119-rebels-killed-balkh-operation)

<sup>36</sup> "Afghan police reportedly seize two tons of drugs", Pajhwok, 3 February 2010

<sup>37</sup> For example, multi-ton caches of opium have been unearthed in places like Uruzgan and Dai Kundi by the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), but these do not figure in CNPA seizure databases. Additionally, foreign operational assistance has a significant effect on seizures and such operations are not currently focused on northern Afghanistan.

**Figure 9: Opium production in Afghanistan by region, 2010-2011**



Source: UNODC

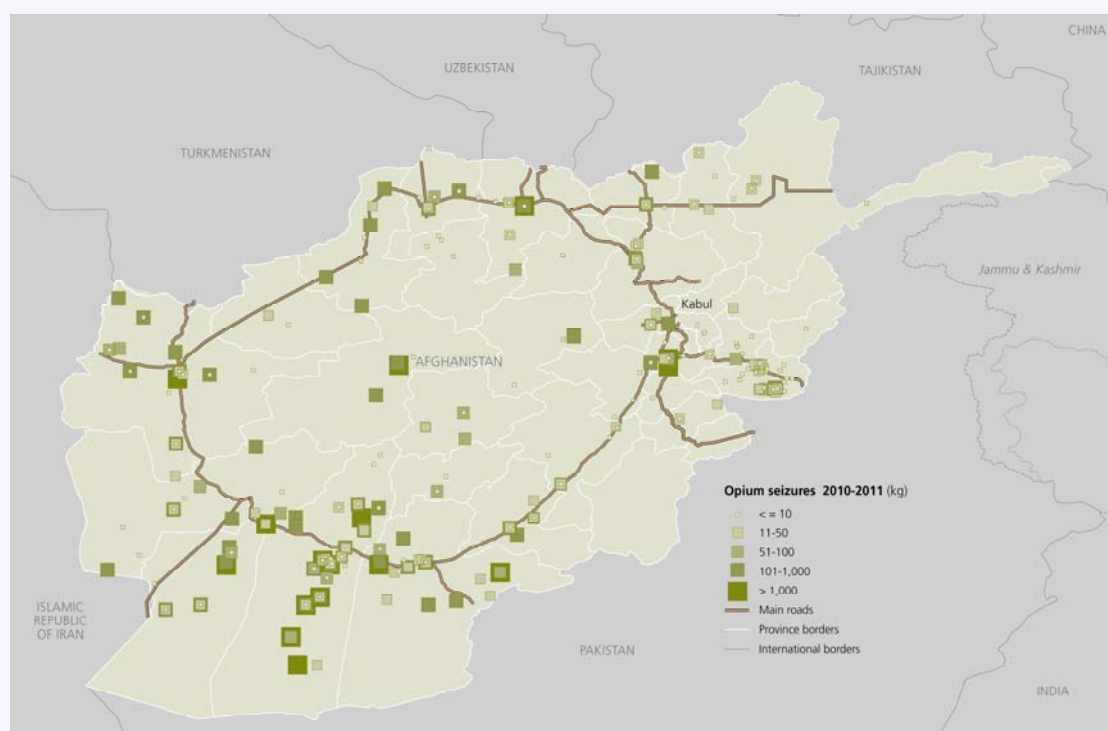
Southern Afghanistan –mainly Hilmand province- concentrates more than 80 per cent of Afghan opium production; the south has been the main producing region for nearly a decade. UNODC estimates that this region has also been stockpiling significant volumes of opiates (morphine, heroin, and opium) since overproduction began occurring in 2006. A 2011 seizure of 16 tons of opium stockpiled in Uruzgan, as well as dozens of multiple-ton seizures in Hilmand and Kandahar, support this theory. At first, the south may seem the most likely source to compensate for opium supply gaps in northern Afghanistan. However, recent research and intelligence in southern Afghanistan (Hilmand, Kandahar) do not support significant opium flows travelling northward. Similarly, UNODC interviews with law enforcement and traffickers in northern Afghanistan (Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan) failed to find accounts of significant south-to-north movements of opium.

There is also limited evidence in the form of seizures indicating massive southern opium outflows to compensate for opium supply gaps in northern Afghanistan. For example, the figure below shows the amount of opium seized in centrally located provinces, which appear to be the most direct link between Hilmand and northern Afghanistan (including Ghor, Dai Kundi, Bamyan, Sari Pul) in 2010-2011. This is clearly not indicative of heavy or even mid-size trafficking flows. A similar situation prevailed in earlier years in these provinces, according to CNPA data. Lack of seizures aside, the topography of centrally located provinces is also a disincentive for traffickers, particularly when considering the existence of alternative routes linking southern and northern Afghanistan.





**Map 6: Reported opium seizures in Afghanistan, 2010-2011**



Source: CNPA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Such alternatives involve connecting with the ring road linking the country's largest cities. The first option would be to transport the opium along the western section of the ring road, travelling through the provinces bordering Turkmenistan (from Badkhis through Faryab to Jawzjan) and linking to Balkh and further east, if necessary. This is a busier thoroughfare with higher seizures than in the more centrally located provinces. Along this route, the province of Faryab is a major axis and large opium seizures have been reported there. Based on seizure data, some opium appears to move from Faryab to Balkh. Unexpectedly, however, large shipments have also been intercepted while travelling in the reverse direction and continuing westward (see Annex).<sup>38</sup> Jawzjan lies between the two provinces and has also recently experienced unusually large opium seizures (204kg in January 2011 and 305 kg in March 2011), travelling both westward and northward.

It is important to note that the opium that is trafficked northward along this route may not solely originate in the south since Badkhis province in western Afghanistan has long been an important producer of opium and is known to send large shipments of opium to Turkmenistan, as well as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Zabihullah Ehsas "Drugs seized in Faryab", 25 December 2010, Pajwok [www.pajhwok.com/ps/node/136440](http://www.pajhwok.com/ps/node/136440); "Caravan of drugs en route to Iran seized in central Afghanistan", Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mashhad, 24 January 2005

<sup>39</sup> UNODC drug flow survey, 2008

**Figure 10: Opium production in Badghis (tons), 2006-2010**

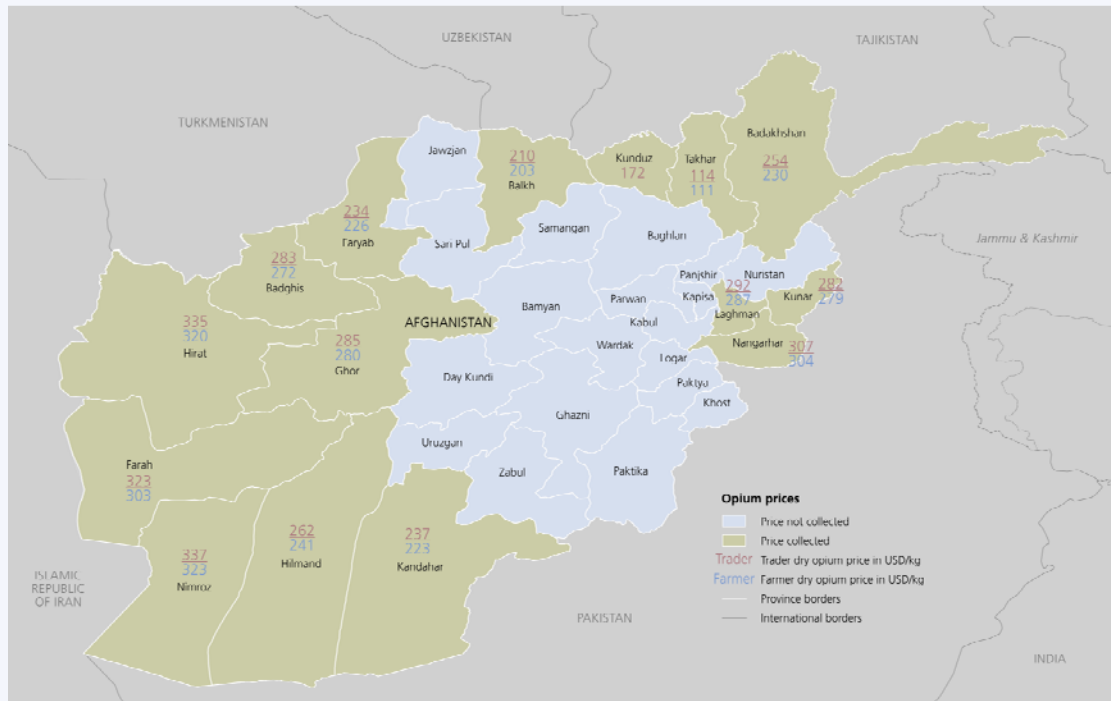


Source: UNODC

A second option would involve using the eastern portion of the ring road from Hilmand through Kandahar, Zabul, Ghazni, Wardak/Logar and traversing Kabul towards northern Afghanistan. Although the topography and infrastructure are superior to other northward trajectories, security along this route represents a prohibitive factor for traffickers. In any case, available data clearly points to north-to-south opium flows, particularly transiting through Kabul (see Annex).<sup>40</sup>

There is a final possibility that opium from the eastern region (Nangarhar province) may be trafficked northward, although UNODC has not received evidence that seizures have been made along this route. It should be mentioned that a significant disincentive for traffickers in other regions is the price of opium in northern Afghanistan, which was the lowest in the country in 2010.

**Map 7: Opium prices in Afghanistan (2010)**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

<sup>40</sup> UNODC mission to Kandahar, September 2011



Opium can be trafficked in both directions,<sup>41</sup> but opium flows from nearly poppy-free northern Afghanistan to southern Afghanistan appear quantifiably more important than southern opium movements northward. While this can support the existence of stockpiles in northern Afghanistan, it also implies that northern Afghanistan receives mostly heroin rather than opium shipments to fill the remaining supply gaps.

### **What is the source of the heroin trafficked to northern Afghanistan?**

To re-iterate, some 90 tons of heroin are required to transit or be produced in northern Afghanistan to meet the annual Northern route demand in 2010. An estimated 45 tons of heroin can be manufactured in northern Afghanistan using opium produced or stocked locally and/or opium trafficked from other regions, for a total of approximately 400 tons in opium equivalents. The remaining 45 tons of heroin had to be sourced from other regions and transported to northern Afghanistan to reach the Northern route.

As with opium, there is a similar lack of heroin seizures in centrally located Afghan provinces. As the map below shows, however, this is also the case in western Afghanistan, which is a confirmed opium corridor. Research in western Afghanistan was inconclusive, but other sources of information infer that the western opium corridor is also used for some heroin shipments. The 2010 Afghanistan drug flow survey conducted by UNODC reports that 20 per cent of the heroin flowing through western Afghanistan (Hirat, Ghor, Badghis, Farah, Nimroz) is in transit to Central Asia.<sup>42</sup> This heroin may have originated in laboratories of western Afghanistan or may be transiting from southern Afghanistan. Once again, Badghis province may play a pivotal role given its heroin laboratories, which supplement the heroin it likely receives from the south.<sup>43</sup> However, excluding flows headed to Turkmenistan, this corridor does not appear to be the main thoroughfare for the northward movements of heroin.

Less elusive than in western Afghanistan, law enforcement reports and seizures indicate heroin movements towards Kabul along the eastern section of the ring road and adjacent secondary roads. Partially due to insecurity and insufficient law enforcement coverage, these heroin flows travelling northward remain largely undetected until they reach Kabul and its adjacent provinces. In 2011, the seizure made in Wardak<sup>44</sup> of a 73-kg shipment directed towards the capital and two seizures totalling 37 kg of heroin made in Kabul itself (sourced from Kandahar) were clear indications of south-to-north movements.<sup>45</sup> Probably one of the largest single seizures in central Afghanistan for 2010, totalling 109 kg of heroin, was made in Kabul and was directed towards Takhar province. This is no coincidence as Kabul is the crossroads for opiate movements in all directions. The Afghan capital also acts as a consolidation and re-distribution area, as well as a meeting point for drug networks from across Afghanistan. This function explains the high volumes of seizures consistently reported from Kabul in heroin, opium and precursor chemicals. Through Kabul, heroin flows toward northern Afghanistan for further trafficking to Central Asia. These flows are reported to

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<sup>41</sup> Zabihullah Ihsas "Two held with opium in Faryab", Pajhwok, 23 January 2011

<sup>42</sup> Mostly to Turkmenistan, but also Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

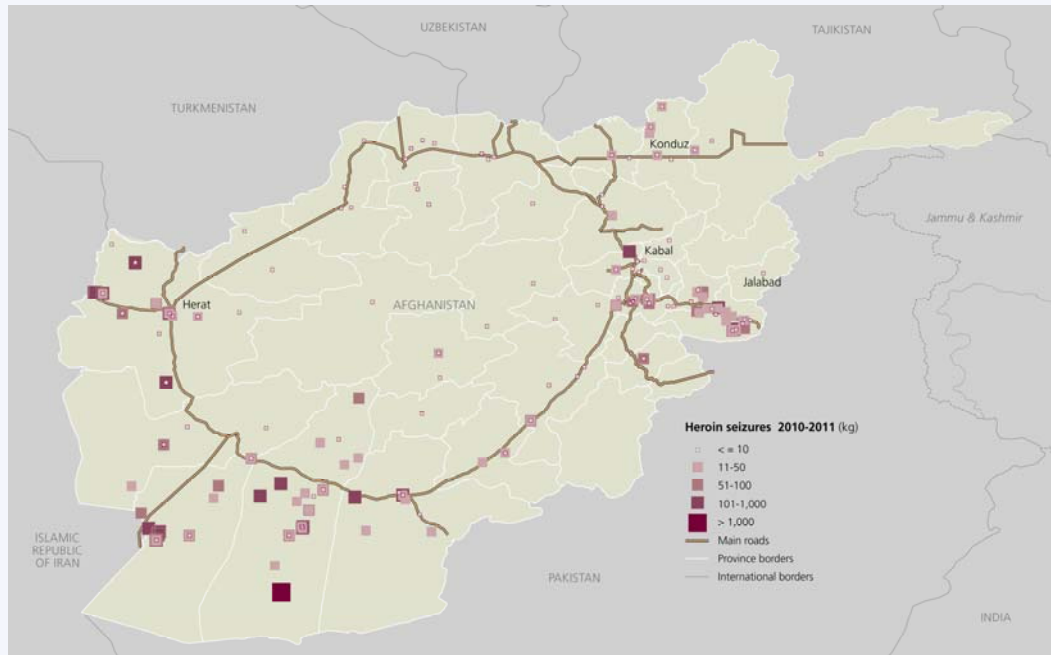
<sup>43</sup> Laboratories operating in the Murghab and/or Jawan districts on Badghis' western and eastern borders, respectively; see also "Murghab District, Badghis District Narrative Assessment", Stability Operations Information Center (SOIC) Camp Julien, Kabul, 5 May 2010, [publicintelligence.info/SOICMurghabAssessment.pdf](http://publicintelligence.info/SOICMurghabAssessment.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Data provided by CNPA intelligence unit, January 2012

<sup>45</sup> CNPA seizure database

come from southern Afghanistan, but also originate from eastern Afghanistan and Nangarhar province in particular.

**Map 8: Reported heroin seizures in Afghanistan, 2010-2011**



Source: CNPA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Evidence continues to build as shipments leave Kabul headed north. In 2010 and 2011 Baghlan province was the site of trafficking activity involving heroin transported northward (see Annex). This resulted in some convictions, such as the two smugglers arrested for trafficking 20 kg of heroin through Baghlan and Kunduz towards Takhar.<sup>46</sup> In January 2011, Parwan reported its largest ever seizure of opiates, consisting of 300 kg of heroin protected by armed traffickers near the Salang pass. Further downstream, 106 kg of heroin were seized in Takhar in 2011. The shipment had been trafficked from Kabul and was destined for Badakhshan.<sup>47</sup> In that case, the apparent indicator of southern origin of the drugs was the logo used by traffickers - the *Sadaqat* logo, which seems to originate in the south (mostly in Hilmand province).

**Sadaqat logo**



Source: CNPA

<sup>46</sup> Two convicted of heroin trafficking, Pajhwok Report, 21 December, 2010

<sup>47</sup> [cjtf.gov.af/index.php/en/components/com\\_wmstimpleflashgallery/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=48:trafficking-100kg-heroin&catid=13:topics](http://cjtf.gov.af/index.php/en/components/com_wmstimpleflashgallery/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48:trafficking-100kg-heroin&catid=13:topics)



Law enforcement officials in Takhar did not, however, believe southern heroin to be a major incoming flow, but they did point to eastern Afghanistan as a major source of opiates for the region.<sup>48</sup> In neighbouring Kunduz, southern provinces were cited as a source of heroin supplies along with Nangarhar and, interestingly, neighbouring Badakhshan.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, it appears that heroin manufactured in Badakhshan is sent to other provinces in northern Afghanistan, adding to the complexity of the flows.

Badakhshan is also the only northern province that appears to be relatively uninfluenced by southern opiate flows. For example, law enforcement sources in that province report that the significant counter-narcotic military operations in Hilmand in 2009-2010 did not have any direct or indirect impact on provincial drug trade.<sup>50</sup> Badakhshan does, however, maintain a strong connection to eastern Afghanistan as the province's heroin production is historically linked to Nangarhari traffickers.<sup>51</sup> Some seizures made in Badakhshan in 2010-2011 involved heroin sourced in Jalalabad.<sup>52</sup>

There are also links between eastern Afghanistan and Balkh province. Traffickers from Mazar-I- Sharif<sup>53</sup> are reported to travel to Jalalabad (the capital of Nangarhar) to purchase heroin which is then trafficked northward.<sup>54</sup> With regard to Kabul, several seizures carried out in the capital in 2010-2011 involved drugs trafficked from Nangarhar. This includes a sizeable 50-kg heroin confiscation in May 2011. The fact that the east is not reported to traffic heroin southward indicates the likelihood of a northward trajectory. At another point of the supply chain, the east is nearly the sole supplier of acetic anhydride to the laboratories in northern Afghanistan,<sup>55</sup> making this region dependent on eastern Afghanistan for its heroin production.

That said, does the east produce enough opiates to supply both northern buyers and maintain its own supply lines, which exit into western Pakistan? As in the north, the east has had an issue of low opium production since 2007. In 2009-2010, opium production was relatively low in Nangarhar, the main producer in the east. The entire eastern opium production for 2010 (56 tons) would have yielded only 8 tons of heroin. It is unclear how much of the heroin manufactured in this region is sent to northern Afghanistan. In order to manufacture and export more, the east would need to draw from its stocks since the sourcing of southern opium is not reported either.<sup>56</sup> A large number of stocks were reported in 2008, but current stock usage in eastern Afghanistan remains unclear.<sup>57</sup> As in northern Afghanistan, seizure data indicates that eastern Afghanistan sends large shipments of opium to the south, which implies it has some opium to spare. Undoubtedly, the east cannot by itself entirely fill the opiate gap in northern Afghanistan, which points back to southern Afghanistan as the logical -yet somewhat inconspicuous- supplier.

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<sup>48</sup> UNODC mission to Takhar, July 2011

<sup>49</sup> UNODC mission to Kunduz, 7-14 April, 2010

<sup>50</sup> UNODC mission to Badakhshan, April 2010

<sup>51</sup> This is due to a transfer of labor techniques that occurred in 2001, Interview with a UNAMA analyst, Kabul, 2010.

<sup>52</sup> For example, on 18 August 2010, in Keshem district, Begum Bridge checkpoint police seized 8.8 kg of heroin in a Corolla car in transit from Jalalabad, and detained the four individuals on board.

<sup>53</sup> CNPA interview, November 2010

<sup>54</sup> Information provided by CNPA, August 2011

<sup>55</sup> The Global Afghan Opium Trade: A threat assessment, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Opium trading systems in Ghor and Hilmand, AREU, 2006; Based on CNPA information, Nangarhar heroin laboratories are only supplied with local stocks as well as opium from Kunar, Laghman and Kapisa.

<sup>57</sup> UNODC Drug Flow Surveyor debriefing, July 2008.

## Internal flows

The northward movement of opium further complicates the picture of internal trafficking flows, but the seizures cited above help to generate basic assumptions about trafficking to and through northern Afghanistan. Thus, intra-regional opiate movements linked to northern Afghanistan occur along several intersecting, and at times parallel, trajectories. The most significant is from the south and east to northern Afghanistan through Kabul and consists almost entirely of heroin. This flow concentrates on the provinces of Takhar and Kunduz, but also supplies heroin to Badakhshan and Balkh.

A reverse course brings opium from northern Afghanistan southward through Kabul. It is unclear where this opium originates exactly in northern Afghanistan, but an obvious location would be Badakhshan. Due to its high morphine content (indicating high quality), opium from this province is prized in Hilmand<sup>58</sup> and in all other Afghan processing centres. Opium inputs from east Afghanistan also join this southward flow, mostly through Kabul. Poppy-free Balkh province also has a history of moving large shipments of opium to the south, through western Afghanistan, but also through Kabul.<sup>59</sup> This Balkh-Kabul route continues to be used in 2011 with small<sup>60</sup> to mid-sized shipments of opium, increasingly seized together with hashish. Indeed, when northern provinces like Balkh began replacing opium with cannabis cultivation,<sup>61</sup> hashish flows from the north to the south increased concomitantly.<sup>62</sup> Other northern areas, including low-seizing provinces like Samangan, have reported large shipments of opium heading towards Kabul, but the rest of the trajectory remains unspecified.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Interview with an Isakzai laboratory owner, June 2010

<sup>59</sup> In 2006, approximately 706 kg of opium were seized in a vehicle travelling from Mazar-e Sharif to Kabul, BBC monitoring, 11 August 2006.

<sup>60</sup> For example, 136 kg of hashish and 35 kg of opium were seized in Balkh travelling towards Kabul in February 2010

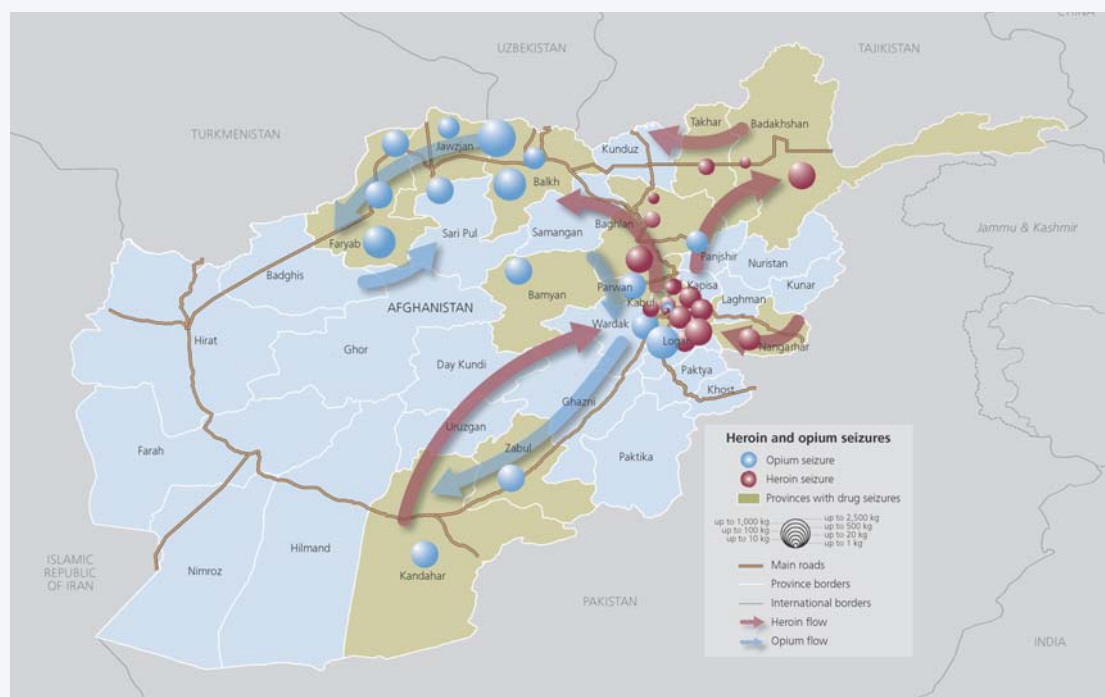
<sup>61</sup> Cannabis can potentially earn a farmer more than opium poppies since it yields twice the quantity of drug per hectare and is cheaper and less labour intensive to grow.

<sup>62</sup> As an example, in 2007 Ghazni police seized 4,000 kg of hashish in a vehicle travelling from Kabul.

<sup>63</sup> 800 kg of opium were seized hidden in coal sacks on a lorry coming from Samangan province in February 2001, BBC monitoring, 2 February 2011 – this figure seems to clash with previous seizure records; for example, in 2008 seizures for Samangan totalled 180 kg opium and 120 kg hashish. See [www.botschaftafghanistan.de/tl\\_files/Dateien\\_zum\\_Download/Text\\_Dateien/2009/Presse\\_Kabul\\_Arg/International%20Media%20Internet%20&%20TVs%20Monitor\\_%2010.02.09\\_engl.pdf](http://www.botschaftafghanistan.de/tl_files/Dateien_zum_Download/Text_Dateien/2009/Presse_Kabul_Arg/International%20Media%20Internet%20&%20TVs%20Monitor_%2010.02.09_engl.pdf)



**Map 9: Heroin and opium seizures with confirmed trajectories involving northern Afghanistan**



Sources: UNODC, CNPA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Another movement is a westward flow within northern Afghanistan, as Badakhshan is a major supplier for neighbouring Takhar and Kunduz.<sup>64</sup> This flow – consisting mostly of heroin – is confined to this part of northern Afghanistan, as very little opiates reach Balkh province from Kunduz.

An opium flow traverses the provinces bordering Turkmenistan (Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan) and appears to move in both clockwise and counter-clockwise fashion from northern Afghanistan (Balkh) to western Afghanistan and vice versa. Here, heroin movements are much harder to detect and likely do not cross many provincial boundaries. This indicates that Badghis and Hirat are probably the main crossing areas for smuggling heroin into Turkmenistan. UNODC information from Faryab suggests that small-scale heroin smuggling into Turkmenistan takes place, but there are no seizures indicating a fixed heroin route continuing north. Based on available seizure data, the movement here appears to consist mostly of opium.

Caveats on data collection and law enforcement capacity aside, the greater visibility of opium on most routes can be explained by its greater detectability, availability and its lower price relative to heroin. The lack of heroin seizures along key Afghan transportation corridors is thus not a reflection of the absence of trafficking, but rather points to weak law enforcement capacity and almost certainly to corruption as heroin is a valuable commodity. As an example, a border Police Chief of Takhar was implicated in the northward trafficking of 130

<sup>64</sup> According to UNODC research, a portion of heroin produced in central districts (Keshem, Darayem, Teshkan and Argo district) is smuggled to Takhar province, and further to Tajikistan. Takhar is also a transit point for the westward flows from Badakhshan towards Kunduz. The main heroin route is through Pul-i Begumin to Rustaq district and further to Kunduz. AOTP research, Badakhshan 9-15 October 2010.

kg of heroin from Nangarhar through the Salang area of Parwan province in 2007. Other arrests have been made since then in northern Afghanistan, but these consist mostly of low and mid-level trafficking, as law enforcement agencies are reluctant to target well-connected traffickers capable of smuggling very large quantities at once.

### Seizures in northern Afghanistan

Between March 2010 and March 2011, 22 per cent of opium seizures were carried out in northern Afghanistan. Northern seizures consisted mostly of the large individual seizures made in Faryab but also in Balkh, for which both origin and destination are unknown. The level of opium seizures in central Afghanistan was higher than in eastern Afghanistan due to the role played by Kabul in the distribution of drug flows in all directions.

**Table 5: Opium and heroin seizures by region (Afghanistan), March 2010- March 2011**

Region	Opium (kg)	Percentage of total	Heroin (kg)	Percentage of total
Central Afghanistan	1 892	10%	142	3%
Eastern Afghanistan	426	2%	136	3%
Western Afghanistan	4 964	27%	3 092	62%
Northern Afghanistan	4 017	22%	225	5%
Southern Afghanistan	7 086	39%	1 397	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 387</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4 991</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: CNPA

Heroin seizures made in northern Afghanistan account for 5 per cent of the country's total seizures in 2010-2011. This total takes into account rising seizures in Kunduz, which are in stark contrast with those in 2009, when a negligible 4.7 kg of heroin and 33 kg of opium were seized in the entire province.<sup>65</sup> To put it into perspective, this accounted for 0.2 per cent of Afghanistan's total heroin seizures and 0.09 per cent of its opium seizures in 2009. Although an improvement over the previous years, current seizure totals are still far from reflecting the province's importance to Northern route trafficking. This is also true for much of northern Afghanistan – and indeed for the entire country. However, unlike in Hilmand where low heroin seizures can be linked to the pervasive insecurity,<sup>66</sup> by Afghan standards northern Afghanistan is on the whole safe for law enforcement operations. Low opiate seizures are therefore concerning and highlight a clear lack of capacity and/or integrity on the part of law enforcement.

The seizures that do get reported in Badakhshan are concentrated around the main processing areas. Rarely are seizures reported in border districts and almost none at official border crossing points (see figure below).<sup>67</sup> To some extent, this seizure pattern is repeated in

<sup>65</sup> In 2008, only 3 kg of heroin and less than 1 kg of opium were seized in Kunduz. Kunduz has been poppy-free for years although some limited opium stocks can still be found in certain districts (Char Dara, Imam Sahib and Dasht-e-Archi).

<sup>66</sup> As an example, heroin seizures in Hilmand only amounted to 207 kg between March 2010 and March 2011, although most Afghan heroin production occurs in the province.

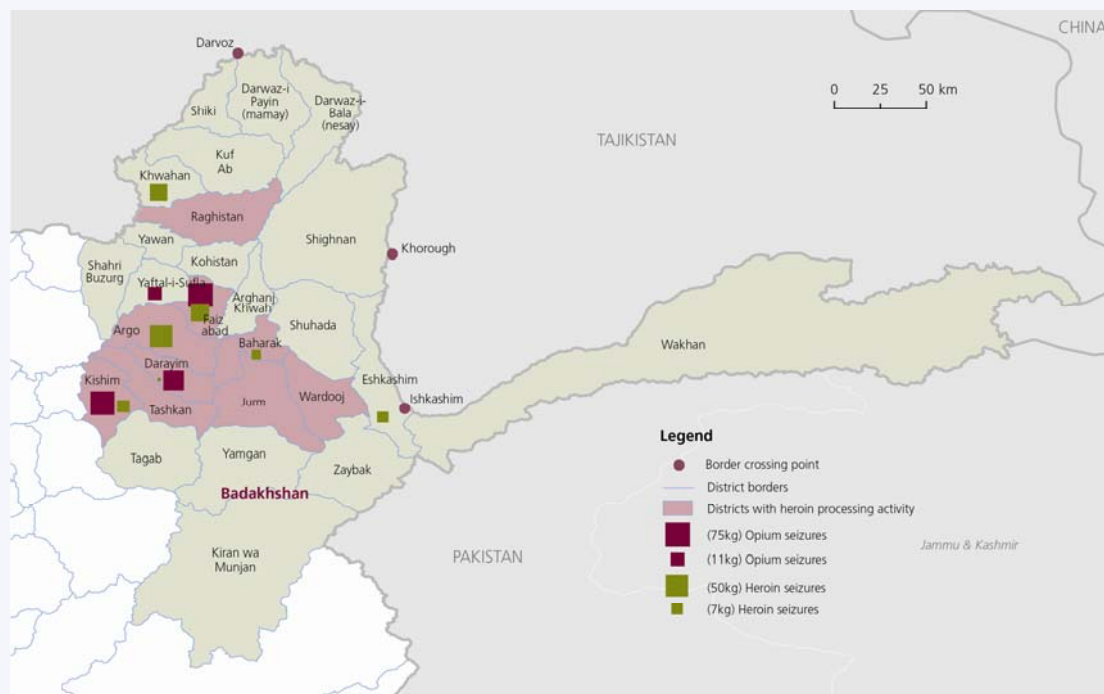
<sup>67</sup> For example, 234 kg of opium were reported to have been seized on a single occasion in Kunduz, far away from the border crossing, which leaves open the question concerning the shipment's destination; "Three smugglers arrested with 234 kg of opium", Pajhwok Report on 17 January 2011.





other provinces of northern Afghanistan. This pattern also partly reflects the remoteness of most trafficking exit points as well as the involvement of officials in enabling smooth trafficking operations.

**Map 10: Opiate seizures and heroin processing districts in Badakhshan province (first ten months of 2011)**



Source: UNODC Country Office Afghanistan, CNPA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

## Profits and beneficiaries

### Profits

Cultivation, production, processing and trafficking generate substantial revenues, which in turn create power bases outside the formal economic and political systems. At the processing level, an average heroin lab manufactures 10 kg a day and approximately 1,000 kg a year.<sup>68</sup> Gross profits from a single lab can reach one million dollars annually.

**Table 6: Potential profit for processors in Badakhshan (per 1 kg of heroin) in 2010**

	Substance	Unit	Price per unit	N. of units required	Total price per substance
A	Opium	1 kg	\$120	9	\$1 080
B	Acetic anhydride	1 L	\$400	1.5	\$600
C=A+B	White heroin	1 kg			\$1 680
D	Finished heroin	1 kg			\$2 800
E=D-C	Maximum profit from 1 kg of heroin				\$1 120

Source: UNODC

<sup>68</sup> “The Afghan Opium Trade: a Threat Assessment”, UNODC, July 2011

For traffickers, there are higher profits to be made for every kilogram of heroin sold at the retail level. The table below shows the retail prices of opium and heroin used in Afghanistan.

**Table 7: Retail price of drugs used in Afghanistan, US\$/ kg (December 2010 prices)**

Region	Opium	Heroin
Central Afghanistan	617	8 230
Eastern Afghanistan	482	4 620
Northern Afghanistan	295	6000
Southern Afghanistan	504	9 100
Western Afghanistan	865	8 800

Source: UNODC

As shown in the table below, the total revenue made by traffickers from the opiates consumed in Afghanistan was around US\$ 173 million in 2010. Altogether, local drug supply networks in northern Afghanistan pocket almost US\$ 50 million; these networks often include low to mid-ranking law enforcement officials. The size of the aggregate profit is a clear incentive for these actors, also giving them a strong interest in local addiction.

**Table 8: Estimated Illicit opiate revenue of local sales to consumers in Afghanistan (US\$) 2010**

Region	Opium	Heroin	Total
Central Afghanistan	49 588 000	14 933 295	64 521 295
Eastern Afghanistan	13 450 000	3 170 475	16 620 475
Northern Afghanistan	42 717 000	6 719 715	49 437 15
Southern Afghanistan	10 649 000	6 222 960	16 871 960
Western Afghanistan	20 608 000	4 721 310	25 329 310
<b>Total</b>	<b>137 012 000</b>	<b>35 768 000</b>	<b>172 780 000</b>

Source: UNODC

When including trafficking to Central Asia which totals some US\$ 344 million, the total annual value of domestic and export sales of illicit opiates in northern Afghanistan is estimated at around US\$ 393 million.

**Table 9: Estimated value of opiate trafficking from northern Afghanistan to Central Asia (US\$) 2010**

Region	Opium	Heroin	Total
<b>Northern Afghanistan</b>	<b>7 191 410</b>	<b>337 004 300</b>	<b>344 195 710</b>

Source: UNODC

This suggests that revenues made in northern Afghanistan are equivalent to 3 per cent of the country's aggregate GDP, which in 2010 was 12.7 billion. The income of northern



traffickers easily matches or even exceeds the provincial GDP of provinces like Badakhshan, which is estimated at 280 million, giving them extensive financial influence over impoverished provinces in northern Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup>

Large sums of drug money are sent out of Afghanistan either in cash using couriers, or disguised and paid in through banks and other financial institutions, or again transmitted by alternative remittance bankers – known as hawala- to global financial centres. Often, these drug profits are re-invested for example in the procurement of goods, food, cars and imported into Afghanistan, as well as being invested in real estate. The short-term benefits that may accrue from the inflow of drug money are likely to be outweighed in the longer term by the diversion of capital to non-productive enterprises and increasing levels of corruption. This risks further distorting an economy still very fragile ten years after the coalition intervention. Some of this capital also goes directly or indirectly towards financing further drug shipments, which perpetuates the vicious cycle.

### Beneficiaries

Much of the drug trade in northern Afghanistan was once under the total control of local warlords and power brokers. Today, many of them have penetrated state structures while still maintaining oversight on drug shipments.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the drug trade in northern Afghanistan has essentially been in the same hands since its inception. Such individuals often have a military background, having fought previously as field commanders under the various jihadi factions (i.e. Jamiat-e-Islami<sup>71</sup>, Hizb-e-Islami, Jumbesh e Milli, Shurai Nazar)<sup>72</sup>, which formed the resistance to the USSR invasion. These factions are usually broken down roughly along ethnic lines, thus Jumbesh e Milli is mostly Uzbek while Jamiat is mostly Tajik.<sup>73</sup> Against a backdrop of inter-ethnic rivalry,<sup>74</sup> elements within these factions compete with one another for influence, development aid and political and economic power, factors which inevitably involve the drug trade.

Political affiliation with former jihadi factions is an important feature of drug networks. One outcome is the geographical division of drug routes based on each faction's influence. Jamiat-e-Islami leadership, for example, is rooted in the Panjshir valley, but extends its influence to many districts of Badakhshan, Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan which straddle drug routes. Competing for the same territory and allegiances are Hizb-e-Islami networks. In provinces

<sup>69</sup> NRVA 2007/2008; World Bank (Afghan GDP 2010 figures); <http://www.citypopulation.de/Afghanistan.html>

<sup>70</sup> Justin Mankin, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats: Gaming The System: How Afghan Opium Underpins Local Power", Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009, Page 195-209

<sup>71</sup> Although Hezb-e-Islami Gulbudeen Hekmatyar, Ithehad-e-Islami led by Professor Abdurab Rassoul Syaf, and other nationalist or ethno-religious groups exist, most of the provinces such as Logar, Kunduz, Kabul, Panjshir, Balkh, Ghor, Hirat, Kapisa, Parwan, Balkh, and Laghman are dominated by the Jamiat-e-Islami party led by former president Professor Burhanudeen Rabani. With the removal of the Taliban in 2001, the country leadership fell into the hands of the Northern Alliance in which Jamiat-e-Islami played a key role. Therefore, most members of this party were appointed as Governors and high-ranking civil and military officials at the central and provincial level. In addition, during Ex-Soviet Union occupation the party had a dominating role among other Mujahideen groups in the above mentioned provinces.

<sup>72</sup> Mark Shaw, "Drug trafficking and the development of organized crime in post-Taliban Afghanistan", UNODC, 2006

<sup>73</sup> Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, Shurai Nazar controlled Takhar and Kunduz, as well as certain areas in Badakhshan and Andarab districts of Baghlan. Jamiyat, meanwhile enjoyed strong armed support in Badakhshan and Baghlan provinces. Since 2003 many of the key players in these factions were appointed to positions of influence including as governors and chiefs of police. Others became Members of Parliament following the decommissioning of Jihadi-militia regiments and units of Afghan Military Forces (AMF).

<sup>74</sup> It should be noted however that influential Jamiat commanders might be Pashtuns while Jumbesh cadres can be Tajiks.

bordering Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Jumbesh e Milli,<sup>75</sup> Jamiat -e Islami and smaller parties (such as the Hazara Hizb-i-Wahdat) are in competition.

This creates the impression of a fragmentation of drug networks, but this is only apparent since cooperation is as likely as competition. In many districts of Balkh for example, forces from different factions control villages within the same vicinity, working both against and with one another. This creates an intricate patchwork of shifting alliances at the individual level. Indeed, many field commanders still have loyalties to multiple parties and these are often temporary. The parties are frequently nothing more than fronts for trafficking operations.<sup>76</sup> Once again the opiate economy plays a key role, as access to drug profits is a determining factor in the warlords' decisions on alliances and allegiances.<sup>77</sup>

Oversight over the drug trade is exercised in the most direct manner possible, usually by appointment to serve as border or law enforcement official at the border or district level. Recent research highlighted the party affiliation (or lack thereof) of provincial chiefs of police across Afghanistan.<sup>78</sup> While not a proxy for the mapping of drug networks, the influence of former jihadi factions in northern Afghanistan is apparent. At the same time, and particularly in northern Afghanistan, this distribution is logical since the opiate economy is a function of local power dynamics.<sup>79</sup>

At the individual level the opium trade underpins and perpetuates local power.<sup>80</sup> A public official can accumulate great wealth through the control of a key crossing or district. Some of the profits garnered can be reinvested in local businesses thus adding an additional layer of legitimacy. In this way, drugs become a commodity to expand licit businesses in Afghanistan, a tool which can in turn be used to facilitate illicit trade, thus linking the black and white economies. As an example, the trade in both cement and motor oil are excellent front businesses for opiate and precursor trafficking. Some traffickers may even establish their own transportation companies, which ensures smoother trafficking operations; others may use official vehicles, or a combination of the two. To secure their business, both licit and illicit, the traffickers have the ability to muster armed men, owing to their previous or current commander status.

<sup>75</sup> Ståle Ulriksen, "Norway's political test in Faryab, Afghanistan: how to lead?", Norwegian Peace building Centre, Noref Policy Brief, 10 July 2010

<sup>76</sup> Interview, UNAMA, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Jonathan Goodhand, "Frontiers and Wars: the Opium Economy in Afghanistan", *Journal of agrarian change*, vol.5 n.2, April 2005, p. 200

<sup>78</sup> Antonio Giustozzi and Mohammad Isaqzadeh, "Afghanistan's Paramilitary Policing in Context: the Risks of Expediency", Afghanistan Analyst Network, AAN Thematic Report 07/2011, p.21

<sup>79</sup> Justin Mankin, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats: Gaming The System: How Afghan Opium Underpins Local Power" Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009 Page 195-209

<sup>80</sup> Justin Mankin, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats: Gaming The System: How Afghan Opium Underpins Local Power" Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall/Winter 2009, Page 195-209



**Figure 11: Typology of drug traffickers in northern Afghanistan**



Source: UNODC

Encouragingly, arrests and more importantly sentencing of mid-level officials are being increasingly reported. On 4 July 2011, the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) announced that a Takhar district<sup>81</sup> police chief and two of his subordinates were sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of trafficking 15 kg of heroin and misusing their authority.<sup>82</sup> On another occasion, in December 2010, a border police commander responsible for the control of Badghis and Hirat crossings into Turkmenistan was sentenced to 10 years in prison.<sup>83</sup> These mid-level operators can be viewed as lieutenants in the trafficking groups, in line with their official organizational hierarchy.<sup>84</sup> At the highest levels, political linkages protect and sustain the largest traffickers. This also goes a long way to explaining the low seizures made in northern Afghanistan, a situation that will largely remain unchanged if higher-level traffickers continue to be immune from prosecution.

The Afghan drug market is fragmented but its core is in the south. The most important traffickers in Afghanistan are thus based in the south and are members of the influential southern Pashtun tribes (e.g. Nurzai, Alizai, Popolzai and Isakzai).<sup>85</sup> Although southern networks were once largely confined to the south (and the west), in 2006 UNODC reported that trafficking networks from the south had expanded northward and have been playing a pivotal role in the expansion of opium production in the north.<sup>86</sup> In this context, the north refers particularly to Balkh -and to a lesser extent Faryab province. In Balkh, the main traffickers are highly collusive networks made up mostly of ethnic Pashtun with political responsibilities. Their relationship with southern traffickers is direct. This north-south connection is based on close links between the Pashtuns of Hilmand and Balkh— many of whom are family members. Dating back to Taliban rule, southern cultivators and processors were informing the Pashtun population in Balkh province regarding the availability of international markets and cultivation techniques.<sup>87</sup> The influence of southern networks is not

<sup>81</sup> The convicted policemen served in the Dasht-i-Qala district.

<sup>82</sup> UNODC, Fortnightly brief on Afghanistan - ISSUE NO. 49, June 29-July 13, 2011

<sup>83</sup> Senior Afghan police officer jailed for helping drug-smugglers, Pajhwok, Kabul, 15 December 2010

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2008/02/23/wanted-for-empty-prison-some-convicted-afghan-drugbarons.html#ixzz1fO9c15y6>

<sup>85</sup> See "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: the transnational threat of Afghan Opiates, UNODC, 2009" for an analysis of tribal dynamics and the drug trade in Afghanistan.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Shaw, "Drug trafficking and the development of organized crime in post-Taliban Afghanistan", UNODC

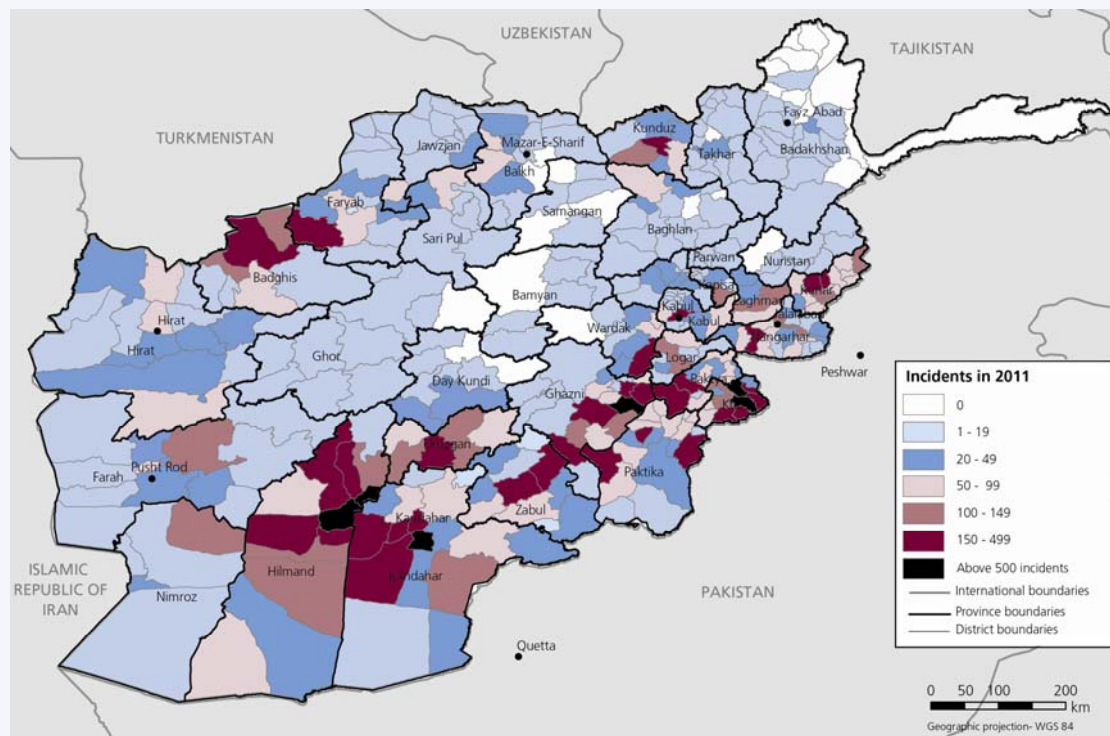
<sup>87</sup> Sophia F.D. Woodcock, "Socio- Economic and Psychological Assessment of Fluctuations and Variations of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Key Provinces in Afghanistan: Balkh, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Central Provinces", August 2006, p.50

significant in northern provinces bordering Tajikistan and the relationship that exists is often directed through Kabul. Northern provinces like Badakhshan have stronger links with the east than with the south. Common ethnicity in this part of northern Afghanistan is not as important as regionalism and history since eastern traffickers - themselves mostly Shinwari Pashtuns- enjoy strong and enduring connections with the Tajiks of Badakhshan.

### Insurgency in northern Afghanistan

In general, northern Afghanistan sees relatively less insurgency-linked violence than other parts of the country (see map). For a long time the main source of instability were the factional disputes caused by commanders competing over smuggling routes (for trafficking drugs and weapons), as well as disputes related to illegal taxation or extortion rackets. This changed in 2009 with increasing insurgent activity in Takhar and Kunduz, which continued into 2010-2011. It should be noted that the rising insecurity in the region does not seem to have negatively impacted counter-narcotics. Seizures have been consistently low in northern Afghanistan, but actually began to rise in 2009.

**Map 11: Security incidents in Afghanistan, 2011**



Source: Adapted from UNODC security incidents map. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### Opiates and insurgency: the case of Takhar province

Takhar is a largely rural province with a population of 900,000, which is nearly evenly split between Tajiks and Uzbeks.<sup>88</sup> There are also pockets of Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. Takhar province was one of the centres of resistance against Soviet occupation and against the Taliban regime. It remains under the strong influence of the former mujahideen commanders of Jamiat-e-Islami and Hizb-e-Islami.

<sup>88</sup> Tajik-dominated districts are Farkhar and Chah Ab. Uzbeks constitute some 70 per cent in the key district of Dashti-Qala.



With regard to security, Takhar is perhaps the most vulnerable regional province of northern Afghanistan. During interviews with a Drug Control Agency (DCA) officer in 2010 it emerged that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Taliban operatives effectively controlled several districts in the north, but also in the south of Takhar.<sup>89</sup> The IMU has reportedly made inroads within the ethnic Uzbek communities of Takhar and now recruits locals for its operations.<sup>90</sup> The Central Asian group's influence in the province is such that one of its members was named shadow governor in 2010.<sup>91</sup> This has obvious consequences for Central Asian security, but it has also made the Pashtun-dominated Taliban presence more acceptable to Uzbek communities in Takhar. UNAMA information in 2010 indicated that the highest risk areas were the northern districts bordering Tajikistan (Darqad, Yang-e-Qala, Kwajabahauddin and Dasht-e-Qala), as shown in the figure below. The presence of foreign fighters has been reported particularly in the Darqad district.

While this presence allows insurgents to project force into Tajikistan, control or influence over border districts also gives the Taliban and other insurgents an opportunity to tap into the heroin pipeline travelling northward. Takhar is the only province in the region with reports of foreign insurgents (mostly Central Asian) taxing the drug trade.<sup>92</sup> It remains unclear precisely how this taxing is conducted, but according to UNAMA sources in 2010 an alliance was formed between insurgents and local drug smugglers to maintain control of the border. In all, insurgents reportedly receive 30 per cent of their financial support from the drug trade.<sup>93</sup> It is difficult to extrapolate any kind of figure from this estimate but, given the importance of the districts under influence, the amounts are not negligible.

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<sup>89</sup> Interview, Drug Control Agency Liaison Officer for Takhar Province, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, January 2011

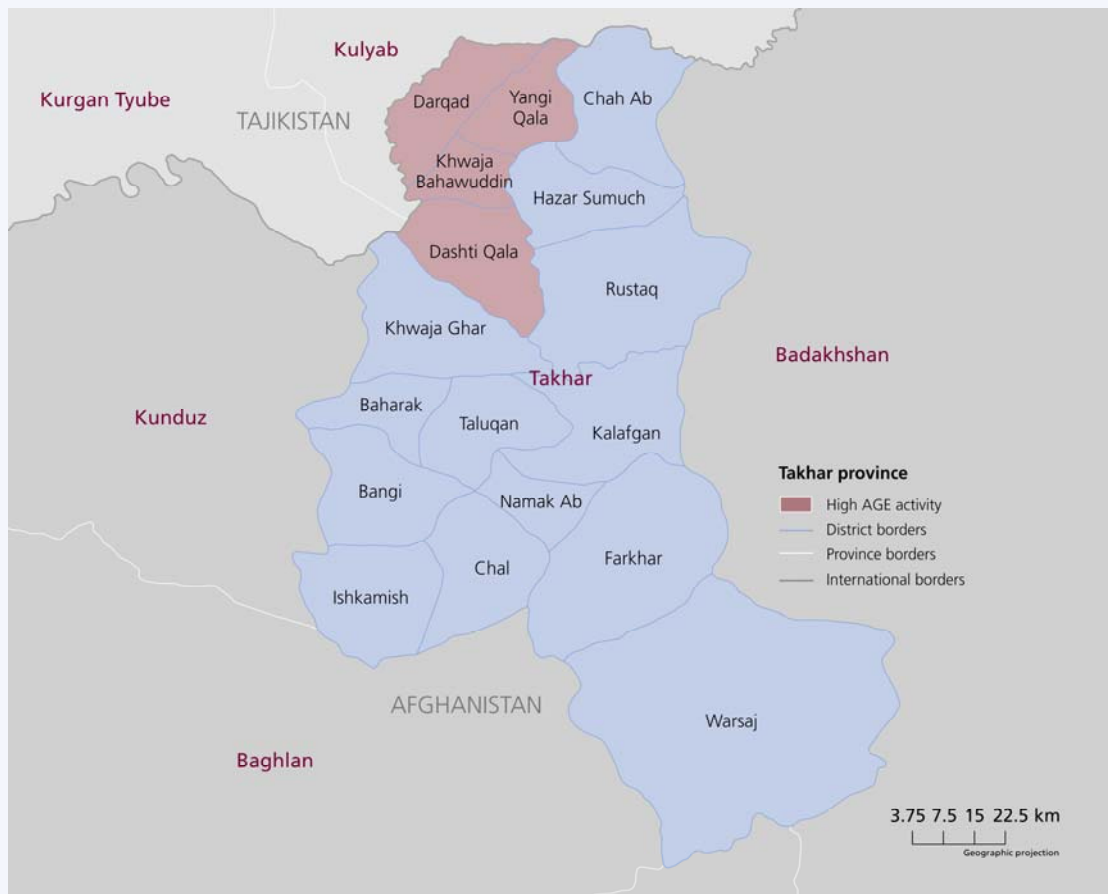
<sup>90</sup> Abubakar Siddique, "Uzbek militants carve north Afghan niche", Asia Times Online, June 2011

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/senior-taliban-military-commissioner-captured-in-takhar.html>, September 4, 2010

<sup>92</sup> Information provided by UNAMA, June 2010.

<sup>93</sup> The rest is composed of 40 per cent financial support from Zakat and Ushar and 30 per cent from their main network outside Afghanistan.

**Map 12: Districts of reported insurgent activity in Takhar, 2009-2010**



Source: CNPA, UNAMA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**Other provinces**

West of Takhar, Kunduz province was largely peaceful until Taliban insurgents started operating there in 2009. Unlike other northern provinces, Taliban presence in Kunduz is interlinked with Pashtun ethnicity. The insurgents are active in all six districts of Kunduz province but concentrate their activities in Char Dara and Archi, both Pashtun-majority districts.<sup>94</sup> Along with Taliban elements,<sup>95</sup> some Hizb-e-Islami<sup>96</sup> and IMU fighters (Uzbeks and Tajiks) are also active in insurgency activities in Kunduz. The IMU are fewer in number and are reported to be active mostly in the border districts and Char Dara working jointly with and under the control of the local insurgents.<sup>97</sup> Tajik law enforcement officers referred to a case involving the IMU which took place in Kunduz in 2009 and in which heroin was being exchanged for arms.<sup>98</sup> That aside, UNODC is not aware of additional evidence of insurgent involvement in narcotics. The province has been poppy-free for years and there are no reported opium stocks in Kunduz from which to manufacture heroin. Moreover, most of

<sup>94</sup> All UN missions were stopped at Char Dara in 2009. UNODC of Kunduz has declared both of them as high-risk areas.  
<sup>95</sup> According to UNAMA sources, many Taliban in Kunduz were formerly linked to HIG, Jamiat, or Mahaz, later joining the Taliban.  
<sup>96</sup> Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e-Islami is more influential in Kunduz than in other provinces of Afghanistan, a fact which is readily explained by his roots in the district of Imam Saheb, see “Support to provincial governance, provincial needs assessment: Kunduz and Takhar”, www.mpil.de/shared/data/pdf/pna\_kunduz-takhar\_2009.pdf, September 2009  
<sup>97</sup> AOTP mission to Kunduz  
<sup>98</sup> According to DCA officers previously posted in Kunduz province, IMU elements trafficked heroin from Badakhshan’s Argo district and bartered the drugs for weapons in the Imam Sahib district; interview DCA officer, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 2009

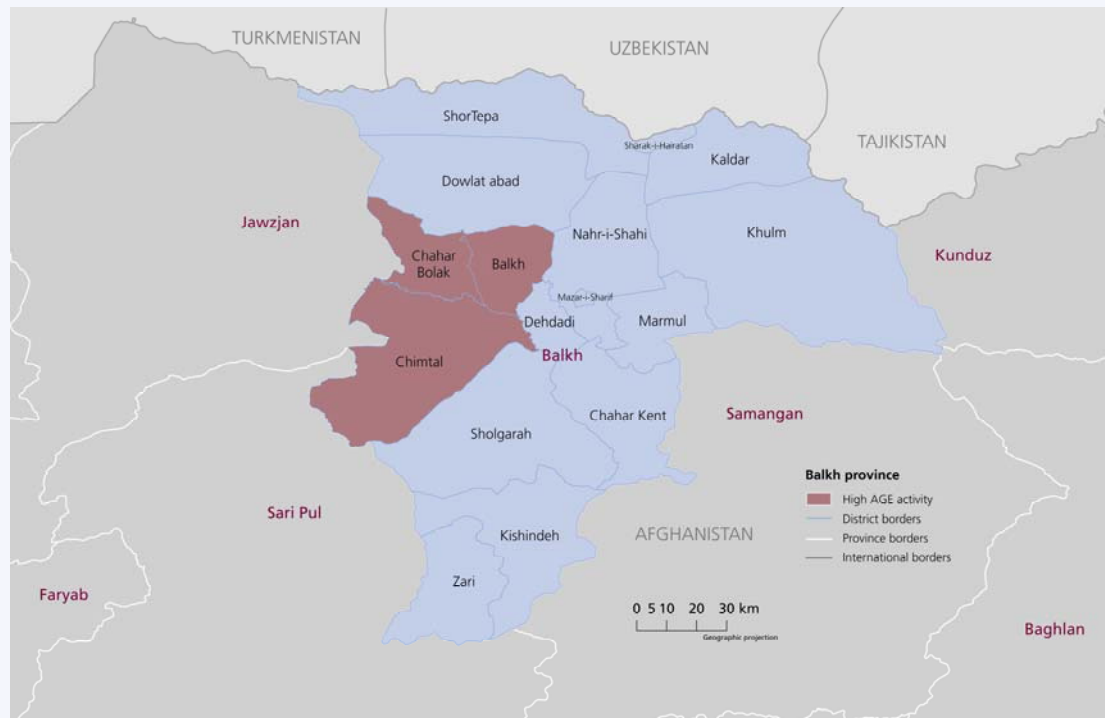




the transit trade is under the control of former northern alliance armed commanders of Uzbek and Tajik ethnicity.<sup>99</sup>

West of Kunduz, Balkh province has been on the receiving end of the rising insecurity affecting its western neighbours. The most unstable and insecure districts are Balkh, Chintal and Charbolak (bordering Sari-i-Pul and Jawzjan). According to UNAMA sources, criminal groups in Balkh work closely with Taliban and Hizb-e-Islami (HIG) elements, but the specifics of this relationship are unknown.<sup>100</sup>

**Map 13: Districts of reported insurgent activity in Balkh, 2009-2010**



Source: CNPA, UNAMA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Further west, Faryab province has become increasingly insecure due to the presence of IMU elements, with predictable effects on law enforcement.<sup>101</sup> In neighbouring Badghis, the Muri Chaq area (a heroin-processing area bordering Turkmenistan) has been the scene of fighting between insurgents and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan forces since 2007.<sup>102</sup> The Government's influence in this province has become increasingly constrained. Instability seems to be projected outward from the Bala Murghab and Ghowrmacht district, which reportedly have a majority Pashtun population. Badghis is viewed by the insurgents themselves as their gateway to the north; this was the first northern province overrun and held by the Taliban in 1996.

By contrast, Badakhshan province has been free of the insurgent-lined insecurity that plagues much of Afghanistan, although security incidents linked to the seasonal production of poppy

<sup>99</sup> UNAMA interview, June 2010

<sup>100</sup> UNAMA interview, June 2010

<sup>101</sup> UNDSS security incidents in Afghanistan 2010-2011, 17 February 2012

<sup>102</sup> "Dozens of Taliban fighters killed in Afghanistan: Police", DAP, 2 June 2008

take place in the spring and autumn (respectively, the harvest and smuggling seasons).<sup>103</sup> The remoteness of the province does, however, put it at risk of becoming a transit region for militants wishing to enter Tajikistan, as evidenced by a cross-border incursion in 2009 (addressed further in the next section). Despite the relative stability enjoyed by the population, the province remains dependent on the narco-economy, which also serves to maintain the powerbase of local commanders who control routes towards Central Asia.

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<sup>103</sup> Some recent reports suggest, however, that disaffected former commanders and drug traffickers have established contact with anti-government elements, most likely with a view to bargaining for a restoration of power and protecting their illegal interests.



## II. TRAFFICKING FROM NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN INTO AND THROUGH CENTRAL ASIA

For the most part, the border between Afghanistan and Central Asia is remote and difficult to access. The Uzbek and Tajik borders are marked by the Panj River, while the area around the Turkmen border is mainly desert. There are more than eight official crossings with Central Asia including two river ports: i). Hairatan (between Balkh province in Afghanistan and Sukhanraya province in Uzbekistan) and ii). Pianj/Sher Khan Bandar (between Khatlon province in Tajikistan and Kunduz province in Afghanistan). These two ports are the primary crossings in terms of trade volumes and infrastructure. On the Afghan side, many border crossings are alleged to be in the hands of corrupt government officials<sup>104</sup> who greatly facilitate the shipping of drugs into Central Asia. This is a problem shared to a certain extent across the border. Some opiates completely bypass border crossings as traffickers may swim, wade and travel by boat across the river to Tajikistan or Uzbekistan while foot crossings are common along the Turkmen border.

### Breaching the frontline

Based on estimated demand in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, approximately 90 tons of heroin were trafficked from northern Afghanistan into Central Asia in 2010. Tajikistan accounts for most of the heroin flow, followed by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Drugs seized in southern Tajikistan are often still in the original packaging from the Afghan laboratory and stamped with a quality insurance logo. Seizures in northern Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia are less likely to be encountered in this form, which may indicate repackaging upstream. At the same time, logos can be found as far afield as the Russian Federation, perhaps as the result of direct and uncut deliveries.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, UNAMA, Kabul, June 2010

**Table 10: Estimated volumes of heroin trafficked through Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan in 2010 (tons)**

Heroin (tons)			Total
Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	
2-4	8-10	75-80	90

Source: UNODC

Heroin aside, it is estimated that an additional 35-40 tons of opium were trafficked from Afghanistan to Central Asian markets in 2010.<sup>105</sup> This figure, based on estimated consumption in Central Asia, is likely conservative, as it does not include potential opium trafficking to the Russian market, the consumption level and source of which remain unclear.<sup>106</sup> UNODC estimates that nearly half of the opium flow travels through the borders of Tajikistan, followed closely by Uzbekistan and with Turkmenistan accounting for only a small proportion.

**Table 11: Estimated volumes of opium trafficked through Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan in 2010 (tons)**

Opium (tons)			Total
Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	
1-3	15-17	18-20	35-40

Source: UNODC

Altogether, Central Asian countries seized some 2,6 tons of heroin in 2010, less than 3 per cent of the estimated 90 tons trafficked through the region. Overall, regional seizures have decreased by 25 per cent in the case of heroin and by 36 per cent for opium, compared to seizures in 2009.<sup>107</sup> One possible explanation for this decrease is a reported trend towards smaller shipments,<sup>108</sup> reflected in the individual seizure data during 2010-2011. This also allows traffickers to spread the risk and mitigate against losses in response to the high volume of single seizures which occurred in 2008-2009.<sup>109</sup> Another possibility is that the Central Asian opium route is strongly dependent on production in the northern region. In that case, dropping opium seizures may be due to an extended period of low opium production in northern Afghanistan.

<sup>105</sup> UNODC, “The Global Afghan Opium Trade: a Threat Assessment”, July 2011

<sup>106</sup> There is a demand in the Russian Federation for locally produced Cherniashka, which is made by mixing opium with acetic anhydride. This injectable home-made solution derived from raw opium is prepared by extracting the opium alkaloids using industrial solvents such as acetone, and refining it into an injectable solution using acetic anhydride, vinegar and baking soda.

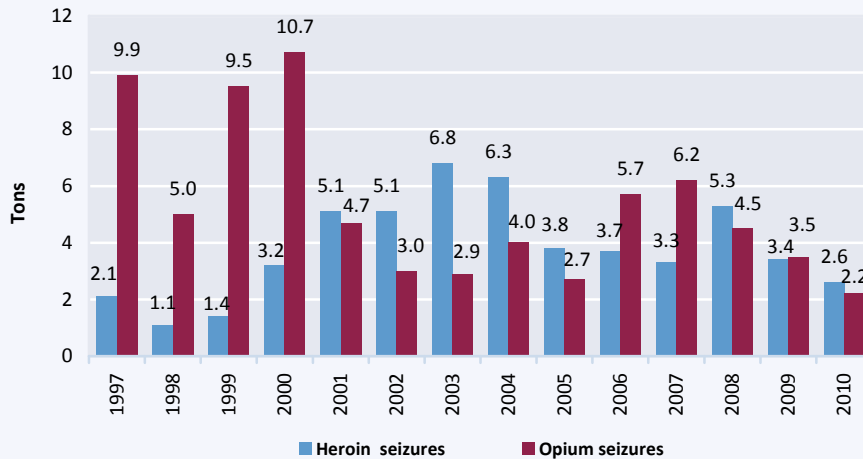
<sup>107</sup> Information provided by the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia, “Drug Situation Report 2010”, November 2011

<sup>108</sup> A pattern also observed in South America; Interview DEA, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 2011

<sup>109</sup> “The globalization of crime”, UNODC, 2011



**Figure 12: Opiate Seizure Trends in Central Asia, 1997-2010**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

While opiate seizures have overall decreased in the region, seizures of acetic anhydride are notable for their absence. The sole acetic anhydride seizure in the last decade occurred in Tajikistan in 2010 and consisted of 440 litres. Outside the region, there have also been at least two documented attempts to smuggle the substance through Central Asia over the last five years, both of which involved diversion from Russian production and transiting through Tajikistan. The main river crossing along the Tajik-Afghan border is reported to be utilized for trafficking acetic anhydride, but there is little quantitative evidence to prove this.

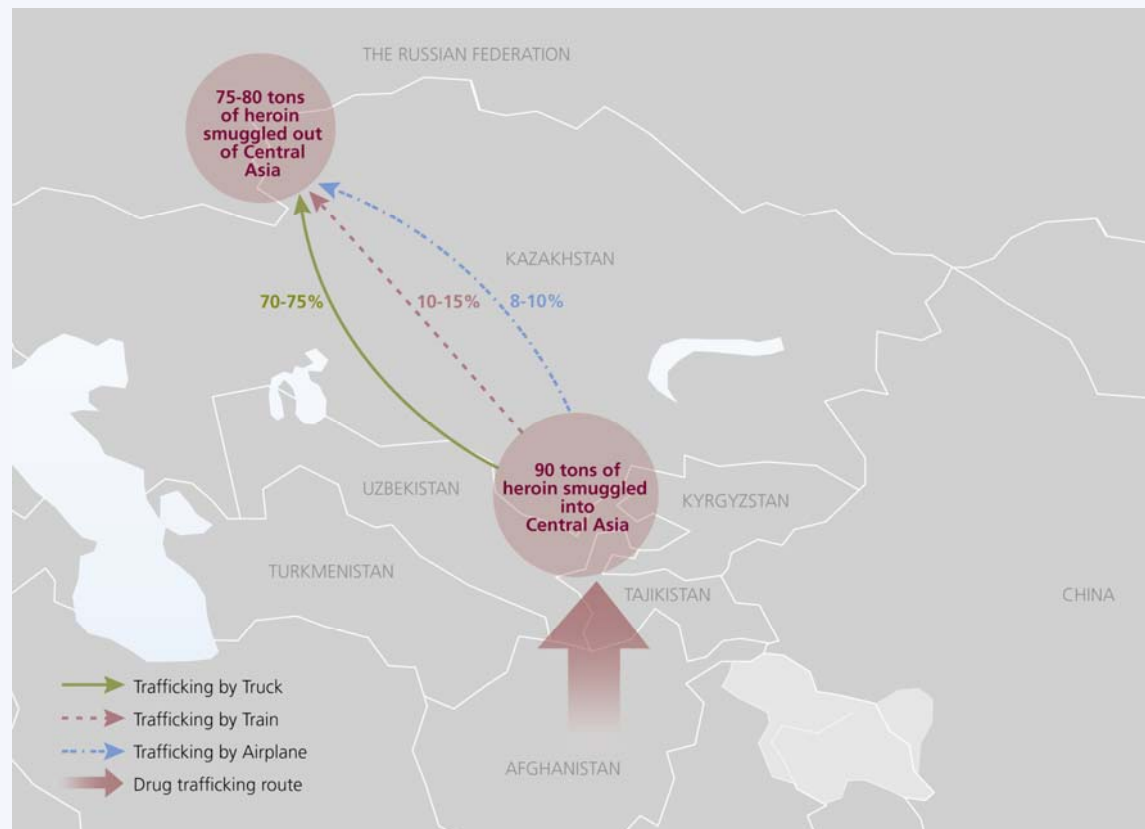
**Map 14: Reported acetic anhydride seizures in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, destined for Afghanistan (2001-2011)**



Source: CARICC, UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

In Central Asia, traffickers have access to a well-developed road and rail network. Around 70-75 per cent of opiates are transported by truck or another vehicle across Central Asia through Kazakhstan to major cities in south-western Russia and western Siberia.<sup>110</sup> Trains and planes usually account for approximately 15-25 per cent of trafficking. Seizures on trains have been on the rise as of 2011, particularly in Uzbekistan. Based on available data for Central Asia and Russia, in 2011 the average size of heroin seizures on trains was 6 kg, out of a reported 55 seizures (at the time of this writing). Shipments can, however, be much larger, as shown by two heroin seizures of 191 kg and 118 kg made in 2010 in the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, respectively.

**Map 15: Trafficking flows on the Northern route by mode of transportation (2010)**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Border management in this region may become more challenging given the recent Customs union agreement between Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus, which will make Kazakhstan the last Customs check before the EU borders.<sup>111</sup> Although the agreement will likely stimulate trade, the impact on drug trafficking remains unclear at the time of this writing. However, in general terms trade flows are increasing and, consequently, the number of TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers) trucks<sup>112</sup> across Central Asia is growing (see table 12). This represents a growing concern for law enforcement agencies,<sup>113</sup> which suspect that trafficking

<sup>110</sup> UNODC, "The Global Afghan Opium Trade: a Threat Assessment", July 2011

<sup>111</sup> Once cargo enters any of the Customs union countries, Customs officials consider it domestic cargo and it is therefore not subject to inspection as long as it remains sealed.

<sup>112</sup> TIR trucks are inspected and sealed by Customs at the point of origin.

<sup>113</sup> Interview CARICC analyst, Almaty, Kazakhstan, June 2010; Interview with Kazakh law-enforcement officers in Astana, September 2011



organizations are blending into licit flows by misusing the TIR agreements. This situation undoubtedly puts additional pressure on border controls.

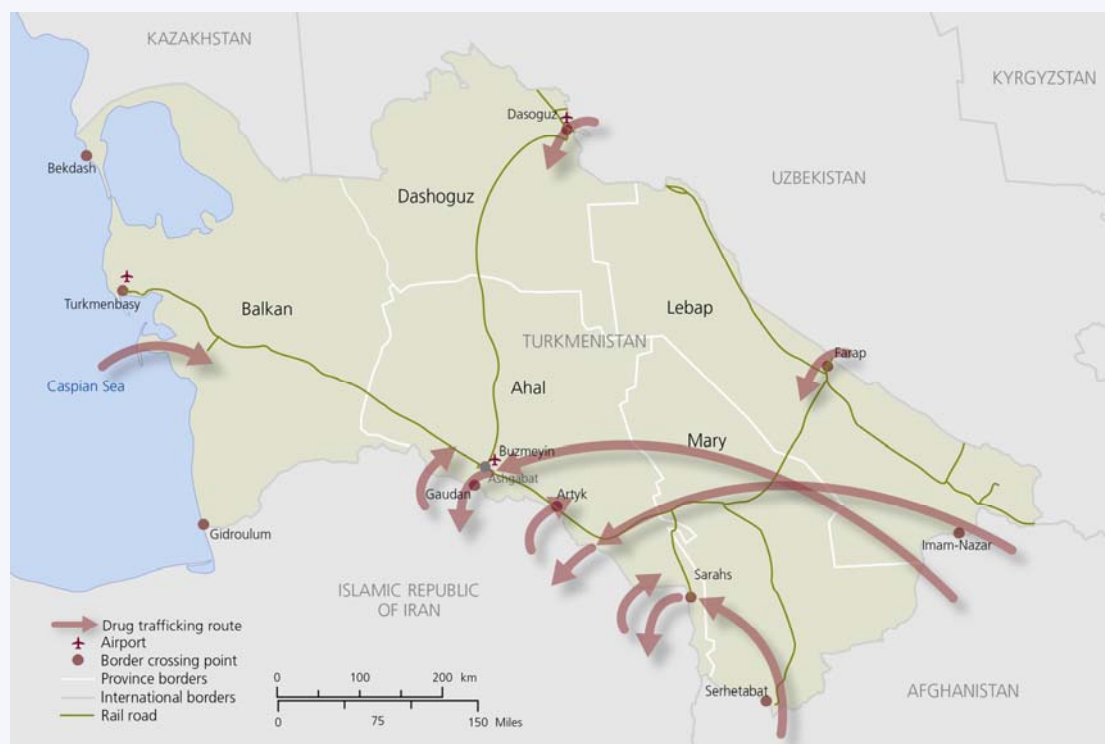
**Table 12: Number of trucks operating with TIR carnets in Central Asia (2006-2009)**

Country	2006	2007	2008	2009
Tajikistan	26	27	41	86
Kyrgyzstan	1 427	1 878	1 804	1 892
Kazakhstan	3 337	4 739	5 161	5 235
Uzbekistan	n/a	900	n/a	1 400

Source: UNECE

## Turkmenistan

**Map 16: Main drug routes and transportation corridors in Turkmenistan**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Among Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan has the longest border with Afghanistan (744 km). Logistically, the country offers quite flat and sparsely populated terrain from the Afghan border to the coast and linkages to south Caucasus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan border itself consists mostly of desert, it is very remote and often crossed by nomadic tribes. Due to the flat terrain, border officers have a comparatively easier time monitoring trafficking activity, but Afghan traffickers rely on corruption as much as stealth. Several Afghan border police officials have been convicted for facilitating trafficking into Turkmenistan.<sup>114</sup> The issue of drug corruption has also been

<sup>114</sup> In December 2010, a senior police officer was sentenced to 10 years in jail for helping drug traffickers smuggle narcotics to Turkmenistan and Iran. Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul, 15 December 2010

acknowledged across the border in the statements of the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, who called for immediate action against this threat.<sup>115</sup>

Locations near the official border crossing point of Imam Nazar in Turkmenistan (bordering Aqina in Faryab province, Afghanistan) and Sherhetabad (bordering Torghundi in Hirat province, Afghanistan) are two of the three primary entry points generally used for small opiate shipments. Currently, some 50 road vehicles cross the Imam Nazar border daily in each direction,<sup>116</sup> consisting mostly of containerized cargo and fuel oil, or gas tankers. The Sherhetabad crossing has a rail link that continues 15 km to transshipment yards in Torghundi, in Hirat province. Rail services at Torghundi transport about 50 wagons per day<sup>117</sup> and a small 2 kg-heroin seizure was reported on a carriage in May 2010. Most of the 20-30 trucks crossing daily at Sherhetabad are reported to be transit trucks and Turkmen officials state with confidence that 100 per cent of trucks are checked.<sup>118</sup> Based on these accounts and the limited seizure data available, it is likely that traffickers bypass the crossings by a few miles and return to the road downstream.<sup>119</sup> Commercial trade flows through the two crossing are set to increase,<sup>120</sup> which may provide new opportunities for traffickers. As it stands, Turkmen border crossings experience smaller trade flows that make it harder for traffickers to blend into, when compared with crossings on Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>121</sup>

Turkmen authorities have also reported seizures of opiates –mostly opium- in the border areas of Badghis province in Afghanistan, with the small Murichak crossing in Murghab district (Badghis) as the presumed origin. Drug crossings across the span of the border can turn violent with shootings taking place between Turkmen border officials and drug traffickers. Given the insular nature of the state, it is perhaps surprising that Turkmenistan would provide some of the most dramatic violence associated with drug trafficking. In September 2008, a number of drug traffickers were neutralized in the capital Ashgabat, following a fierce gun battle that took the lives of several Turkmen police officers.<sup>122</sup>

Turkmenistan is ranked last in regional heroin seizure volumes for 2010 (with only 104 kg seized), but it comes first in opium seizures with 757 kg. According to Turkmen border guards, heroin shipments through Afghanistan are not large (2-20 kg at most) and crossing occurs in isolated areas and at illegal border crossing points.<sup>123</sup> In 2010, reported Turkmen seizures on the Afghan border totalled 4 kg of heroin and 67 kg of opium. It should be noted that the lack of cooperation and information sharing between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan is not facilitating counter-narcotics operations.

<sup>115</sup> "The Turkmen President demands purge of interior agencies over drugs", Turkmenistan.ru, 12 May 2010

<sup>116</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2010; [https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Phase%20II\\_Final\\_June%2023%2710.pdf](https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Phase%20II_Final_June%2023%2710.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> [www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Volume%202%20Supplementary%20Rerports.pdf](http://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Volume%202%20Supplementary%20Rerports.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> UNODC mission to Turkmenistan, November 2009

<sup>119</sup> In a recent case, 8 kg of heroin were destined for Turkmenistan through Khan Charbagh, located a few km from the Imam Nazar crossing; see [www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/10/05/district-police-chief-among-5-convicted-drug-charges](http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/10/05/district-police-chief-among-5-convicted-drug-charges)

<sup>120</sup> "Revenues increase by 30 per cent in northern Afghan port", BBC Monitoring, 26 August 2011; According to the Asian Development Bank, the Imam-Nazar crossing is set to become a major border post "with the development of substantial flows of traffic between Central Asia and the Indian Sub-continent/ the Arabian Sea"; see Asian Development Bank, 2010; [https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Phase%20II\\_Final\\_June%2023%2710.pdf](https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Phase%20II_Final_June%2023%2710.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> Interview, Asian Development Bank, Kabul, June 2010

<sup>122</sup> "Turkmen violence 'drug related'", BBC, 14 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7614983.stm>

<sup>123</sup> Interview, Turkmen Border Guards, Sherhetabad, Turkmenistan, October 2009



**Table 13: Reported opiate seizures on the Turkmen-Afghan border, 2010**

Drug	Amount (in kg)	Location
Opium	67	Turkmen-Afghan border
Heroin	4	Turkmen-Afghan border
Total opium seized in Turkmenistan 2010	757 kg	
Border seizures as a proportion of total opium seizures 2010	9%	
Total heroin seized in Turkmenistan 2010	104 kg	
Border seizures as a proportion of total heroin seizures 2010	4%	

Source: Compiled from Government Reports, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia.

\*Figures are preliminary and may be revised when updated information becomes available.

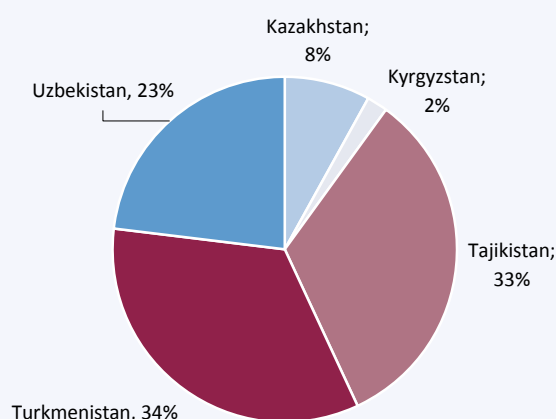
Heroin seizures made in Turkmenistan in 2010 produced a seizure ratio of 3-5 per cent relative to the country's estimated intake of heroin flows. In 2009, Turkmenistan seized 420 kg for a very high heroin interdiction rate of 10-20 per cent on the strength of two major heroin seizures. As regards opium, it is surprising that Turkmenistan is estimated to import relatively little opium (1-3 tons as estimated by UNODC), given that in 2009-2010 it seized the most opium of any Central Asian country.<sup>124</sup> The country's seizure ratio in 2010 is estimated at 25-57 per cent, relative to the country's estimated intake of opium flows, with seizures totalling 757 kg. Even at the lower end of the range, this indicates a very impressive performance on the part of Turkmen law enforcement. Incredibly, this was topped the previous year, when Turkmenistan seized a total of 1,259 kg of opium. Part of this efficiency can be linked to a strong state intelligence and law enforcement network, including the establishment of a State Drug Control Service in January 2008. This, combined with the insular nature of the country, provide few opportunities for non-local drug networks to implant themselves in Turkmenistan.

However, it remains extremely difficult to establish the magnitude of the flows with more accuracy due to consumption data collection and reliability problems in Turkmenistan. Other than official data, a wide range of anecdotal evidence suggests that addiction is a growing problem,<sup>125</sup> with some reports advancing that every extended Turkmen family has at least one drug addict.<sup>126</sup> It is entirely possible that the level of opiate use in the country is higher than currently estimated. An in-depth drug use study in Turkmenistan would significantly increase the accuracy of estimates for the country.

<sup>124</sup> Drug Situation Report, ROCA, 2011

<sup>125</sup> Interview, INL, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, November 2009; Interview, WHO, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, November 2009; Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, "Turkmenistan Struggles to Combat Drugs", November 1, 2011, *Eurasianet*, [www.eurasianet.org/node/64415](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64415)

<sup>126</sup> J. CHIVERS, "Heroin Seizes Turkmenistan, a Nation Ill Equipped to Cope", 11 July 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/11/world/asia/11turkmen.html?pagewanted=all>

**Figure 13: Distribution of opium seizures in Central Asia by country (2010)**

Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

Although neighbours,<sup>127</sup> in recent years Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have not even reported small heroin flows from Turkmenistan. This is unexpected in the case of Uzbekistan given the advantageous combination of vicinity, transportation infrastructure and topography. In fact, the opposite occurs as Turkmenistan intermittently receives small shipments from neighbouring Uzbekistan (see Uzbekistan section). As regards sea connections, the ferry connecting Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan is no longer believed to be used for heroin trajectories. Neither of its Caspian Sea neighbours -Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation- have reported receiving opiates from Turkmenistan over the past decade. In the case of Kazakhstan, the flow of goods is negligible and the border region between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is extremely remote with almost no settlements. This, together with the current visa regime in Turkmenistan which constrains the entry of foreigners and exit by Turkmens, makes this route an unlikely target for opiate traffickers. However, the situation could change in the coming years, as a new railway line linking Turkmenistan with Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be commissioned in late 2011. This will make the cargo transit route from the region to the Gulf 600 km shorter, becoming an important part of the transcontinental transport corridor linking China and Europe. It is estimated that some 3-5 million tons of cargo will be initially transported annually, which will later be raised to 10-12 million tons.<sup>128</sup> Leaving the Islamic Republic of Iran aside, the fact that trade links with Kazakhstan will also be strengthened may provide an incentive for traffickers to look for alternate routes to the Tajik or even the Turkish border.

In 2010, law enforcement intelligence in both Central Asia and Afghanistan reported that heroin flows into Turkmenistan were increasing, in part due to stricter controls along the Tajik-Afghan border and to the appearance of laboratories near the Afghan-Turkmen border.<sup>129</sup> However, this is not supported by the limited seizure information made available from either side of the border. Turkmen heroin seizures actually declined by 75 per cent in 2010. There were, however, significant seizures of opiates in 2009 with one huge 215-kg seizure of heroin and another 228 kg of opium seized in November 2009. These, however, were destined for the Islamic Republic of Iran and not the Northern route. In a reverse

<sup>127</sup> UNODC ROCA, "Drug compendium 2010", 2010

<sup>128</sup> [www.turkmenistan.ru/?page\\_id=3&lang\\_id=en&elem\\_id=17275&type=event&sort=date\\_desc](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=17275&type=event&sort=date_desc)

<sup>129</sup> Interview with CARICC officers, March and September 2011

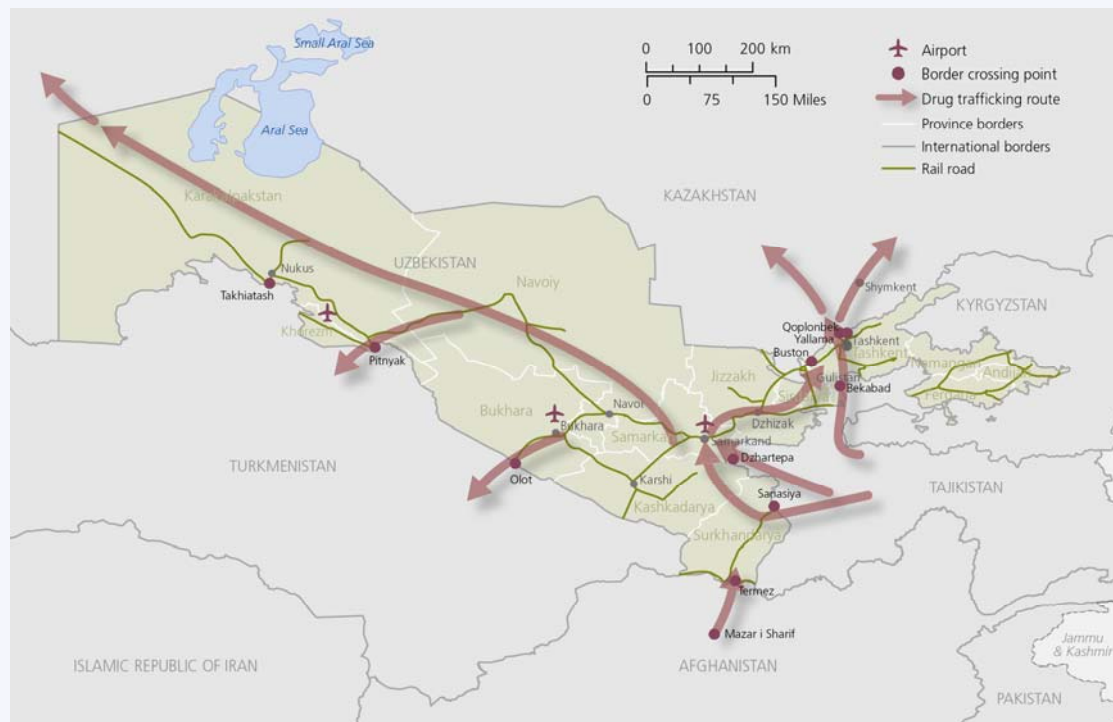


course, some 100 kg of opium were also seized coming into Turkmenistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2009. That same year, Turkmenistan also reported a handful of cases involving opium trafficking from the Islamic Republic of Iran across the Caspian Sea into Turkmenistan. In 2010, Turkmenistan officially reported 29 cases of opiates being smuggled into the country from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Most of this appeared to be in the form of opium and consisting of small (2-10 kg) to mid-size (20-60 kg) shipments. As of 2011, a number of seizures continued to be recorded on the Turkmen-Iranian border, with attempts to traffic drugs in both directions.

This two-way trajectory is no accident. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian country to share a boundary with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Irregular crossings along this border have always occurred, facilitated by ethnic links into north-eastern Iran. More importantly, the Islamic Republic of Iran receives nearly 35 per cent of the Afghan opiate production, which is trafficked further onto the Balkan route towards the Turkish border. It appears that some traffickers are bypassing the stringent Iranian border control measures focused mainly on the Iran-Afghanistan border and prefer to transit through Turkmenistan to reach the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, Turkmenistan appears much more linked to the Balkan route than to the Northern route.

## Uzbekistan

**Map 17: Main drug routes and transportation corridors in Uzbekistan**

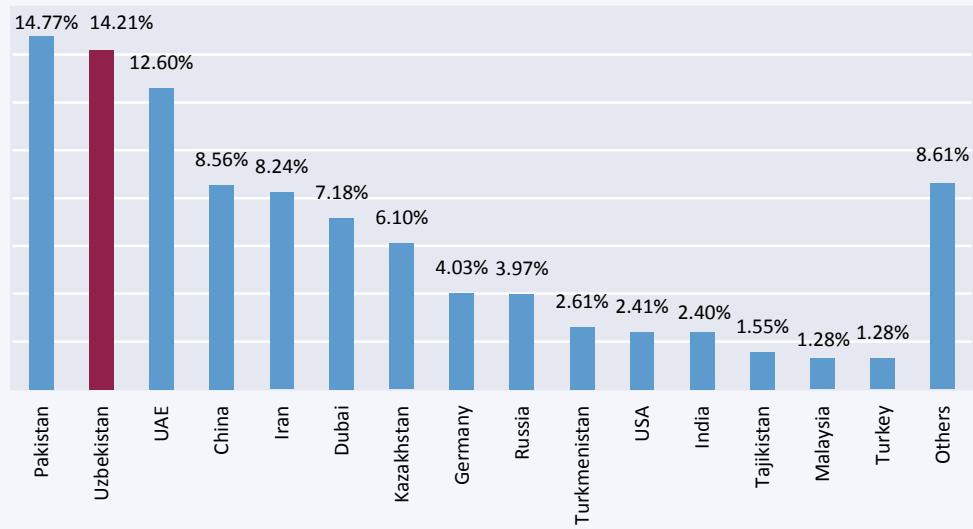


Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Uzbekistan shares a 137-km border with Balkh province in Afghanistan. The main crossing is the Hairatan border crossing point located at a bridge over the Amu Darya River in Kaldar district. Customs data indicate relatively high traffic through Hairatan, with a daily turnover of 40-50 vehicles, mostly trucks. The crossing has been equipped with a scanner, although it appears to be periodically breaking down. The entire border is double-fenced with barbed

wire and watchtowers with radio communications are positioned at frequent intervals. A large river port in the Uzbek city of Termez ships approximately 1,000 tons of cargo daily 25 kilometres east to the Afghan dry port of Hairatan on 65-foot barges. Virtually all out-bound cargo is in the form of steel shipping containers. The port also receives cargo from Afghanistan in return. Each day, three trains transport approximately 1,000 containers across the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border, on a rail line that now extends into Mazar-i-Sharif, in Balkh province.<sup>130</sup> Uzbekistan is one of Afghanistan’s main trade partners and the country has invested significantly in the rehabilitation of northern Afghanistan’s economy.

**Figure 14: Afghanistan’s import structure, 2009**



*Source: Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan Center for Economic Research*

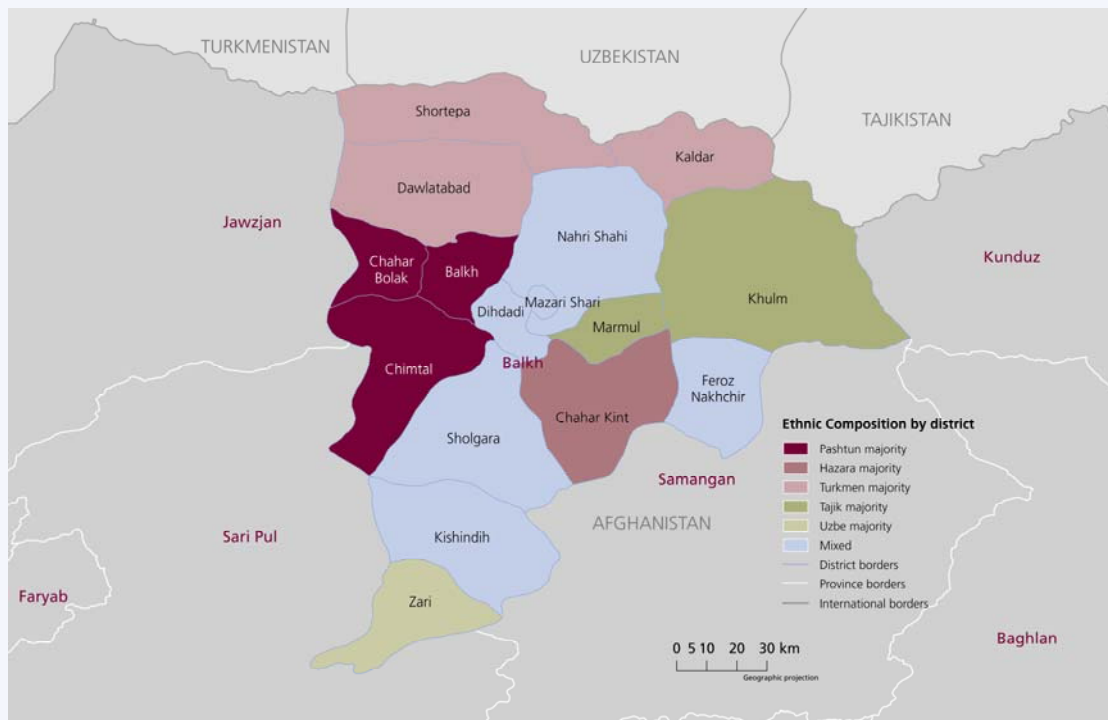
The drug trade along this border is sometimes simplistically portrayed as motivated by Uzbek ethnic ties spanning the border of both countries. In reality, Balkh provincial districts bordering Uzbekistan are dominated by ethnic Turkmens (see map). These are usually smaller entrepreneurs involved in direct opiate crossings. Uzbek is also a minority language in Balkh province, Dari is spoken by about 50 per cent of Balkh’s population while the second most frequent language is Pashto, followed by Turkmen (11.9 per cent) and Uzbeki (10.7 per cent).<sup>131</sup> In fact, through the rest of Balkh’s districts, the main traffickers are ethnic Pashtuns rather than ethnic Uzbeks (see northern Afghanistan section).

<sup>130</sup> [http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/incsr\\_2009.html](http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/incsr_2009.html)

<sup>131</sup> [www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Volume%202%20Supplementary%20Reports.pdf](http://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/Railway%20Documents/Volume%202%20Supplementary%20Reports.pdf)



**Map 18: Ethnic composition by district in Balkh province**



Source: Afghanistan Ministry of rural rehabilitation and development, UNAMA, NPS. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Due to strict Uzbek controls at Hairatan (owing to the short and well-equipped border and significant law enforcement presence), Afghan smugglers prefer using unofficial crossing points or they make their way into Uzbekistan through the Tajik border. There are still attempts at direct smuggling across the Hairatan checkpoint.<sup>132</sup> However, the bulk of trafficking through this border seems to make use of illegal crossing points and consists mostly of small opium shipments crossing under the cover of darkness. These types of crossings present some risk for traffickers given that Uzbek law enforcement use boats to patrol the Amu Darya River. Shootouts can readily occur and several traffickers continue to lose their lives attempting to cross into Uzbekistan.

**Train crossing the Hairaton Bridge on the Uzbek-Afghan border**



Source: UNODC Country Office Afghanistan

<sup>132</sup> In 2010 Uzbek Customs seized two shipments consisting of 66 kg of opium and 2.5 kg of heroin, respectively.

In 2010, a total of 2.5 kg of heroin and 131 kg of opium were seized on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border. This accounts for barely 1 per cent of 2010 total heroin seizures in Uzbekistan (1,004 kg), but a full 25 per cent of its total opium seizures (519 kg). This proportion, particularly as it concerns heroin, may change since the opening of a railway link connecting Hairatan to Mazar-i-sharif in August 2011. This will significantly enhance trade flows between the two countries, as the new line can carry eight trains in each direction per day, or nearly 9 million tons of cargo per year. While this will unquestionably stimulate development in northern Afghanistan, it may also provide Afghan traffickers with a more efficient means of crossing directly into Uzbekistan. Acetic anhydride traffickers may also find it convenient to use the country's international trade connections and the infrastructure of Hairatan when aiming for the Afghan market. This increase in the turnover of cross-border goods is not proportional to the current anti-smuggling capacity of the Afghan border and Customs staff. There would be less cause for concern if cross-border cooperation were to increase, but at present -and in contrast to the healthy state of commercial relations- there is virtually no communication between Uzbek and Afghan border officials.

**Table 14: Reported opiate seizures on the Uzbek-Afghan border (2010)**

Drug	Amount (in kg)	Location
Opium	131	Hairatan crossing
Heroin	2.5	Hairatan crossing
<b>Total opium seized in Uzbekistan 2010</b>		1 004 kg
Border seizures as a proportion of total opium seizures 2010		25%
<b>Total heroin seized in Uzbekistan 2010</b>		519 kg
Border seizures as a proportion of total heroin seizures 2010		1%

Source: Compiled from Government Reports, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia, Uzbek media sources.

\*Figures are preliminary and may be revised when updated information becomes available.

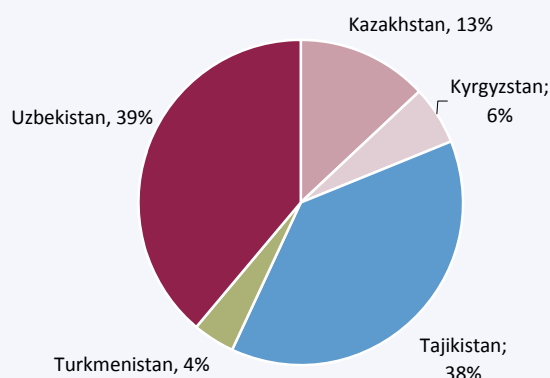
In many ways, a similar communication problem prevails on the Tajik-Uzbek border. This is a much more serious concern for regional counter-narcotics efforts since the main Uzbek border targeted by opiate traffickers is its eastern boundary with Tajikistan. Once across the Tajik-Afghan border, traffickers use the length of the Uzbek-Tajik border to transport well-concealed opiates and, increasingly, hashish. This has resulted in several violent shootouts between traffickers and border controls on both sides.<sup>133</sup> Traffickers may use official crossings or rely on extended family links in the villages straddling the border, thereby bypassing crossings. The border appears to be well monitored, Uzbek staff at the border is usually well-trained and salaries are relatively high. This has resulted in impressive seizures for Uzbekistan, but deeper cross-border cooperation would likely result in more intelligence concerning the links along the lines of supply. It should also be noted that, as in other countries in the

<sup>133</sup> In December 2009 several Tajik smugglers were reportedly shot by Uzbekistan border guards as they attempted to smuggle 23 kilograms of heroin into the country; Interview, Panjakent DCA, Tajikistan, January 2010.



region, bribes and informal payments at crossings still occur with some regularity.<sup>134</sup> In many such cases, officials are being paid to look the other way rather than for active participation in the smuggling process. Uzbek officials are forthcoming about the problem of corruption<sup>135</sup> and encouragingly Uzbekistan recently adopted a new programme to improve the Customs service.<sup>136</sup>

**Figure 15: Distribution of heroin seizures in Central Asia by country (2010)**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

Uzbekistan leads all of Central Asia in heroin seizures for 2010. It is also the only Central Asian country where heroin seizures increased (by 25 per cent). This is probably a reflection of the strength of its police, Customs and national security services. On the assumption that 9 tons of heroin were trafficked through Uzbekistan in 2010, the country's interdiction rate is relatively high at above ten per cent. The seizure ratio is much lower for opium, slightly above 3 per cent. Heroin seizures are usually small to mid-sized (5-40 kg), but in 2010-2011 the country continued to make large single confiscations (70-120 kg). The single largest heroin seizure in 2010 consisted of 116 kg seized by Customs at the Oybek vehicle crossing bordering northern Tajikistan.<sup>137</sup> In 2011, 91 kg were seized in a single seizure in Samarqand; the shipment originated in Tajikistan and was destined for the Russian Federation. Single seizures of that size rarely occur in Tajikistan and almost never in other Central Asian countries. This may indicate that smaller shipments may be consolidated in Tajikistan before onward trafficking to Uzbekistan.<sup>138</sup>

The cross-border opiate trafficking from Tajikistan relies heavily on car and truck trips and mostly continues on to Kazakhstan. There are a number of drug routes through the country, but the capital Tashkent is the final centralization point for most opiates in Uzbekistan. The good rail and road connections with the adjacent oblast of southern Kazakhstan and opiate seizures indicate that this is the country's key export route.

<sup>134</sup> "International Logistics Centres/Nodes Network Central Asia at the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Turkmenistan", Progress Report Number Two, July – December 2009- 15 January 2010, <http://www.traceca-org.org/fileadmin/fm-dam/TAREP/64ll/64ll4.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> Maksim Yeniseyev, "Fighting corruption in Uzbek Customs a major concern", Central Asia online, [centralasiaonline.com/en\\_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/11/04/feature-01](http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/11/04/feature-01), 2011-11-04

<sup>136</sup> "Uzbekistan adopts new programme to improve customs service", Regnum news agency, 5 November 2011

<sup>137</sup> "Uzbek Customs officers net nearly 130 kg of heroin in three cases", Uzbek National News Agency website, 23 June 2010

<sup>138</sup> The largest seizure made in Tajikistan in 2011 weighted 31 kg; interview CARICC analyst, January 2012.

Another rail and road drug corridor travels through the isolated Karakal-Pakistan region towards western Mangystau Oblast in Kazakhstan. Although at first glance it may appear counter-intuitive, this route also branches off into Turkmenistan.<sup>139</sup> For a long time this trafficking was thought of consisting mostly of small shipments into Turkmenistan destined for the local market in border areas.<sup>140</sup> It now appears that larger shipments of 20-30 kg of heroin are also trafficked. Uzbek law enforcement interdicted a smuggling group using this route in April 2010.<sup>141</sup> Importantly, there is no reported incoming opiate trafficking from Turkmenistan.

Uzbekistan has some of the best international air connections in the region (see Annex); that said, UNODC is not aware of heroin shipments moving by air traced back to the country, indicating that the majority of opiates entering Uzbekistan are transported into Kazakhstan by road or rail. Uzbekistan is currently the obligatory transit country for Tajik trains and Afghan rail cargo. In 2011, the country reported an unusually high number of seizures on trains, accounting for nearly two thirds of rail seizures in Central Asia. Most train seizures are small, ranging between 5 and 15 kg and none are above 20 kg (see Annex for a list of reported seizures in 2011). In 2009, Uzbek law enforcement seized 126 kg of heroin, which was intended for export by rail to the Russian Federation. This single load is by itself larger than all 2011 smaller confiscations combined. The effort placed into concealment varies greatly. Narcotics may be hidden in passenger luggage or clothes, but traffickers will also build false floors and hidden compartments or hide drugs in cargo. CARICC analysts comment that in 2011 they saw an increase in “impersonal trafficking”.<sup>142</sup> This method usually involves traffickers attaching heroin with magnets above railcar axles underneath the wagon. In some cases, the car is marked and the narcotics are removed later, usually before reaching destination.

Smuggling opiates by rail through Uzbekistan requires less complex logistical arrangements than travelling by road and less interaction with law enforcement since rail traffic encounters far fewer delays at borders.<sup>143</sup> One exception to this appears to be the hours-long inspection of Tajik labour migrants aboard the Dushanbe-Moscow train. Here again, increasing intelligence sharing between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan would help to offset the risk of opiate trafficking, while perhaps reducing long procedures. At the moment, however, Uzbekistan is developing its border security policy largely in isolation.

## Tajikistan

The bulk of Northern route opiates is traditionally trafficked via the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border and this was largely still the case in 2010-2011. On the assumption that 75-80 tons of heroin and 18-20 tons of opium were trafficked through Tajikistan in 2010, on average approximately 200 kg of heroin and 50 kg of opium were trafficked into the country on a daily basis. However, yearly seizures represent only a fraction of the estimated flow. In 2010, Tajikistan confiscated 985 kg of heroin and 744 kg of opium.

<sup>139</sup> “Uzbek security officers bust drug smuggling ring”, BBC Monitoring, April 2010

<sup>140</sup> Interview, Turkmen border guards, Asghabat, November 2009

<sup>141</sup> The shipments would cross from Tajikistan into Surkhandarya region, towards Horezm region and Karakalpakstan republic and from here continue into Turkmenistan.

<sup>142</sup> Interview, CARICC analyst, January 2012

<sup>143</sup> ADB, “Uzbekistan: Trade Facilitation and Logistics Development Strategy Report”, 2009, p.9





Nevertheless, Tajikistan is able to seize the most opiates in the entire region. The country's border with Afghanistan has long been the most vulnerable in Central Asia, particularly on account of topography, but also capacity. An added challenge is that most of the remaining opium production and most laboratories in northern Afghanistan are situated in areas bordering Tajikistan. The heroin seized by Tajik law enforcement is reported to be high purity, hydrochloride (HCL) and is almost always found in the original laboratory packaging stamped with different brand logos.<sup>144</sup> This correlates with production in Badakhshan province, which consists almost exclusively of heroin HCL.

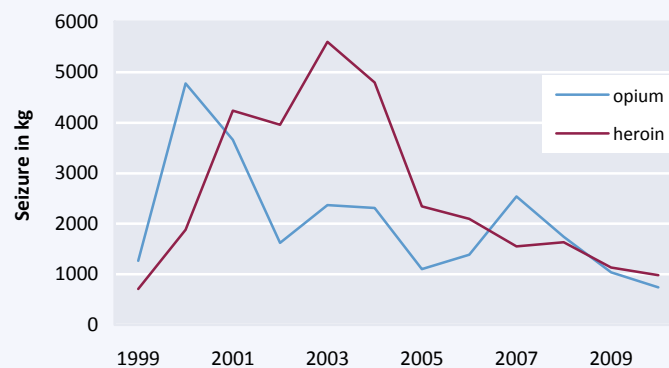
#### "999" Heroin logo denoting high purity



Source: Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan

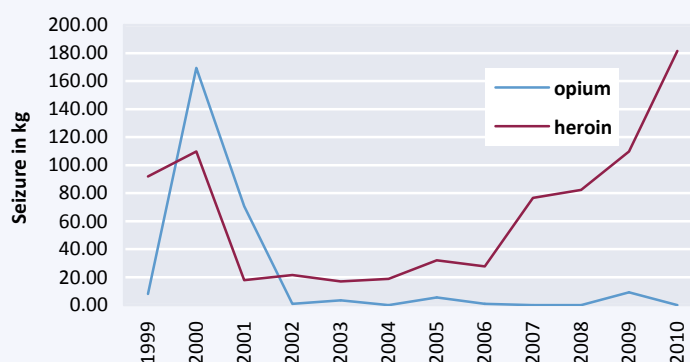
As shown in the figure below, heroin seizures in Tajikistan have been steadily declining. Opium seizures, although more haphazard, have also been decreasing since 2007. A partially inverse trend is observed when looking at Tajik Customs data, which clearly shows an upward trend in heroin seizures. This is possibly a result of capacity building at Tajikistan's official border crossings over the last decade. Whether true or not, it is clear that very little opium has been trafficked –or detected– at any of the country's official border crossing points in the last decade. The number of opiate seizures made by Tajik Customs dropped by more than 50 per cent in the first half of 2011.

**Figure 16: Total opiate seizures in Tajikistan (1999-2010)**



Sources: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia,

<sup>144</sup> Interview, Officer of the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, August 2011

**Figure 17: Opiate seizures by Tajik Customs Service (1999-2010)**


Sources: Tajikistan Customs Service

Customs aside, the first lines of protection on Tajik borders are the approximately 7,000-8,000 border guards positioned in Tajikistan, of which 6,000 are conscripts. Border guards can be divided into two groups - the young, low-paid<sup>145</sup> and poorly trained conscripts and the officers who are on the whole better paid (with an average salary of \$200-400 at mid-rank)<sup>146</sup> and crucially better trained.<sup>147</sup> Tajik border guards also saw their opiate seizures decrease by more than 60 per cent in the first half of 2011. On the whole, border guards seize more opiates than Customs, which indicates that the entirety of the border is being utilized.

An explanation for the overall decrease in opiate seizures across the border may be that traffickers are changing their modus operandi, trafficking smaller quantities and using alternate crossing routes. There is good communication between Tajik and Afghan border officials, in part due to a shared language. There is also a great deal of corrupt partnerships, which go a long way to facilitating trafficking operations.<sup>148</sup>

**Table 15: Opiate seizures (kg) by Tajik Customs and border guards for the first 7 months of 2010-2011**

	Customs (TC) 2010	2011	Border guards	
			2010	2011
<b>Total drugs seized</b>	42 588	17 415	111 783	44 460
<i>Increase/decrease (in %)</i>		-59.1%		-60.2%
Heroin	42 537	17 415	74 977	25 360
<i>Increase/decrease (in %)</i>		-59.1%		-66.2%
Raw opium	0.051		36 806	19 100
<i>Increase/decrease (in %)</i>				-48.1%

Source: DCA of Tajikistan

Conditions along the Afghan-Tajik border are extremely challenging in terms of climate, topography and security. Violence manifests itself in frequent shootouts with traffickers or

<sup>145</sup> Border guard conscripts receive approximately US\$ 2 per month.

<sup>146</sup> US\$ 400 is the pay of a lieutenant colonel and enough to live on. Mid-rank officials receive a lower pay.

<sup>147</sup> Interview, BOMCA officer, Dushanbe Tajikistan, September 2011

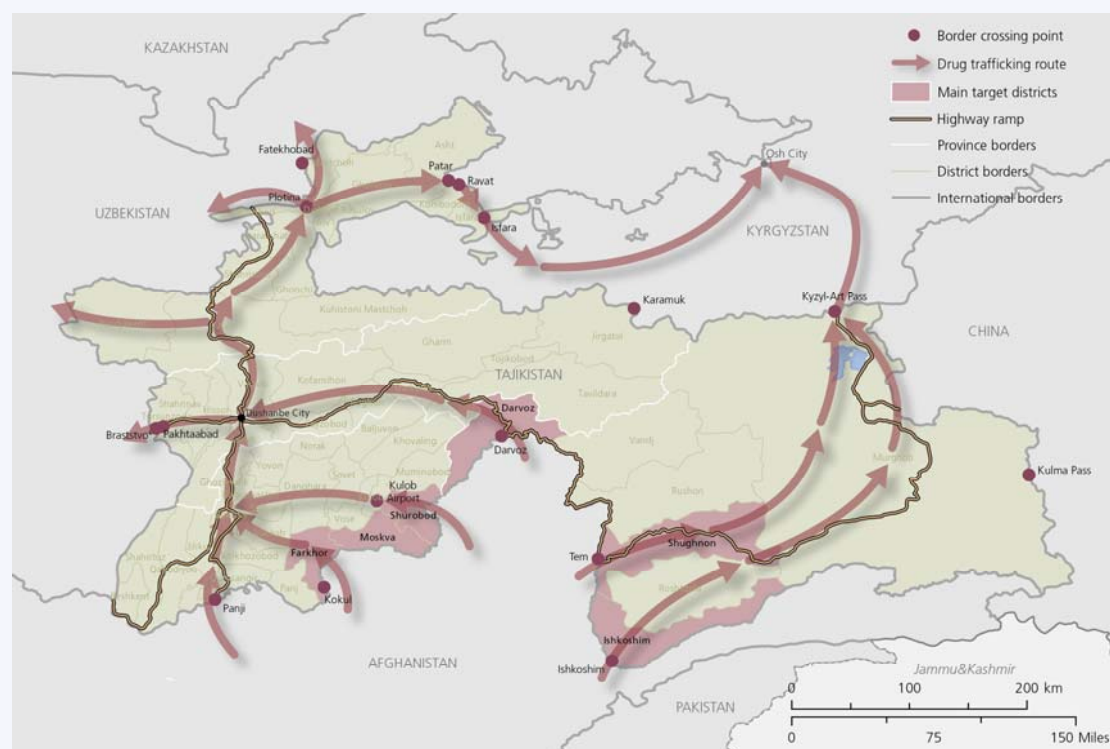
<sup>148</sup> Jamestown Foundation, Tajikistan Suffers the Effects of Its Porous Afghan Border, 16 June 2011, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e5637aa2.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e5637aa2.html); accessed 23 November 2011



border trespassers. The key border district for both shipments<sup>149</sup> and shootouts is Shurotabad district in Khatlon. In 2010, more than six Tajik border officials and DCA staff lost their lives there fighting with traffickers.<sup>150</sup> In 2011 violence spread to other districts. In a single week in September, Tajik border guards were involved in several shootouts with armed traffickers in the Hamadoni and Kumsangir districts, leaving three dead among the trespassers.<sup>151</sup> Local district residents are also victims of violence from drug traffickers. Kidnapping for ransom or extortion is rife<sup>152</sup> and has been consistently reported in Shurotabad district for at least a decade.

The bulk of the opiate flow travels through districts where Afghan Government authority is either patchy or applied without integrity. On the Tajik side, this corresponds to the districts of Ishkashim, Shughnan, Darvoz, Shurotabad, Hamadoni and Farkhor.<sup>153</sup> There are two major flows entering Tajikistan, roughly divided between the eastern and western parts of the country. Upon entry, opiates are repackaged and consolidated first in Dushanbe and then trafficked northward to Osh in Kyrgyzstan or westward into Uzbekistan. A small portion is directed by air to the Russian Federation.

**Map 19: Main trafficking border districts and drug routes in Tajikistan**



Source: DCA of Tajikistan, CNPA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

<sup>149</sup> In 2011, almost 480 kg of narcotics were seized in the district; see [news.tj/en/news/over-479-kilos-narcotics-seized-shuroobod-district-2010](http://news.tj/en/news/over-479-kilos-narcotics-seized-shuroobod-district-2010)

<sup>150</sup> In February 2009, two DCA officers were killed and three Border Police officers were wounded in the same district.

<sup>151</sup> Asia-Plus, 29 September 2011

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1414528.html>, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1412985.html>, <http://www.ca-news.org/news/755241>

<sup>153</sup> UNODC Field Office Tajikistan, Interviews with Tajik Drug Control Agency Liaison Officers, 11 January 2010; Interview with the Director of the Drug Control Agency, November 2009.

### *Tajikistan: the western flow and border crossings*

The importance of the western flow is reflected in the seizures reported by Khatlon province. In 2010, 42 per cent of all drugs were seized in Khatlon, primarily in the border districts of Hamadoni, Shurabad, Farkhor and Pyandj.<sup>154</sup> A noteworthy district missing from this list is Kumsangir, which hosts the Nizhny-Panj bridge (Sher Khan Bandar in Afghanistan), the main crossing point of the Tajik-Afghan border.

#### **Nizhny Panj bridge with Tajikistan on the right and Afghanistan on the left**



*Source: UNODC*

Heroin seizures at that crossing rarely surpassed 100 kg of heroin in 2007-2009<sup>155</sup> and seemed to have dropped down to negligible levels in 2010. Heroin aside, very little opium has been seized at the crossing itself, consistent with overall Customs seizures. Low opium seizures appear strange at face value, given opium's distinct and noticeable odour and given the several tons of opium estimated to be trafficked into Tajikistan. Across the border in Kunduz province, the low opium and heroin seizures suggest that Afghan law enforcement is as unsuccessful as their Tajik counterparts in stemming the flow of opiates.

Approximately 30-40 trucks are using the crossing each day, a seemingly manageable amount for dedicated searches, although the quality of the searches remains unclear as the scanner appears to be periodically breaking down.<sup>156</sup> Border officials at the crossing told UNODC that physical inspection is carried out on every truck, including sealed cargo.<sup>157</sup> Reportedly this includes transit traffic even if Tajik Customs does not record the seizure of any narcotic on a transit vehicle.<sup>158</sup> An assessment by Border Management in Northern Afghanistan (BOMNAF) states that Tajik authorities allow few non-Tajik trucks onto their roads. As a result, goods –in many cases only transiting Afghanistan- have to be loaded onto Tajik trucks before leaving the crossing point.<sup>159</sup> On the one hand this increases the risk of detection; on the other, the procedure still allows for illicit transit shipments since it is not focused on any specific search criteria.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Tajik DCA 2010 report

<sup>155</sup> Interview Pianj Customs, June 2010 (2007 – 70 kg of heroin, 2008 –82 kg of heroin, 2009 – first 10 months 104 kg of heroin and 165 grams)

<sup>156</sup> Interview Pianj Customs, June 2010; UNODC ROCA Tajikistan sub-office, mission to Nizhni-Pianj International Bridge, January, 2010

<sup>157</sup> UNODC ROCA Tajikistan sub-office, mission to Nizhni-Pianj International Bridge, January, 2010

<sup>158</sup> Information provided by Customs Service of Tajikistan, September 2011

<sup>159</sup> [http://www.undp.tj/files/AF\\_BM\\_EVAL\\_FINAL\\_Report\\_2009\\_09\\_10.pdf](http://www.undp.tj/files/AF_BM_EVAL_FINAL_Report_2009_09_10.pdf)

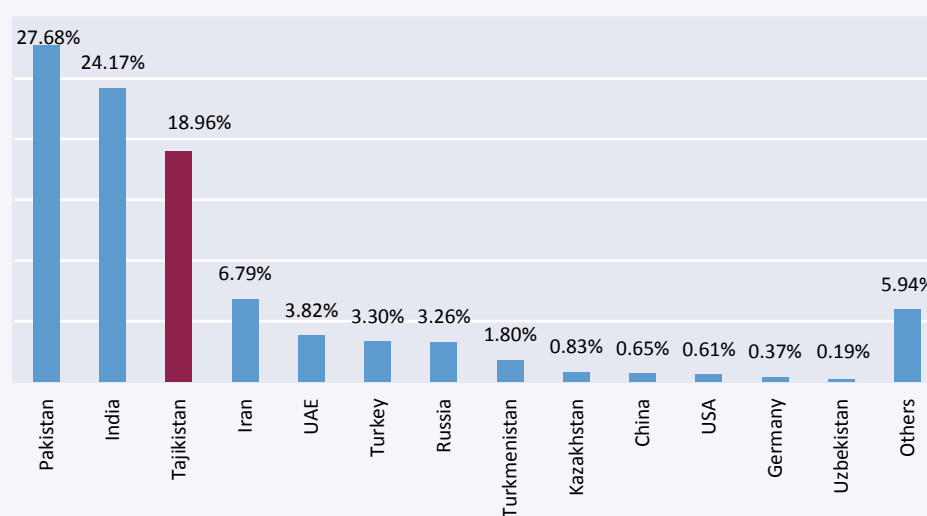
<sup>160</sup> Customs officials at the bridge told UNODC that most commercial vehicles from Pakistan and Afghanistan travel to a neutral transit point at the bridge crossing where the cargo is off-loaded from their trucks and placed onto Tajik trucks. However, it was also



It is unlikely that the same dedication is placed on outgoing shipments since Tajik border measures are focused on opiate imports. This may provide an incentive for the trafficking of acetic anhydride from Tajikistan to laboratories in northern Afghanistan.<sup>161</sup> In that context, the Nizhny-Panj bridge's direct connection to Kunduz city and the ring road could be misused for transporting chemicals towards Badakhshan, for instance. There appear to be ongoing attempts to bring acetic anhydride into Tajikistan for onward trafficking;<sup>162</sup> however, no evidence of acetic anhydride trafficking from Tajikistan has emerged in the form of seizures in northern Afghanistan. Outside the Nizhny Panj crossing, the topography of the Tajik-Afghan border region makes large-scale precursor trafficking challenging.

Tajikistan is Afghanistan's biggest export partner in Central Asia (see figure below). Cement<sup>163</sup> and fruit appear to be the main cargo entering Tajikistan.<sup>164</sup> Tajik border officials comment that the bulky nature and time consuming process of searching through cement bags makes inspections difficult. An added difficulty is the apparent impossibility for either sniffer dogs or scanners to detect heroin in a cement bag.<sup>165</sup> This presents clear opportunities for traffickers and there have been cases of heroin concealed among cement shipments at several crossings on this border.<sup>166</sup> Such cases also serve to highlight the limits of hard border control measures, which need to be supplemented with intelligence sharing and risk assessments.

**Figure 18: Afghanistan export structure, 2009**



Source: Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan Center for Economic Research

added that an Afghan driver can be issued a 15-day visa if the load cannot be transferred and it is not uncommon for a shipment of goods to go directly to Dushanbe from Afghanistan. UNODC ROCA Tajikistan sub-office, mission to Nizhni-Pianj International Bridge, January 2010

<sup>161</sup> "Drug dealer sentenced to 12 years in jail" Pajhwok Report, 10 January 2011

<sup>162</sup> "Drug dealer sentenced to 12 years in jail" Pajhwok Report, 10 January 2011

<sup>163</sup> The majority of cement is imported from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan reportedly exports around 50,000 tons of cement to Tajikistan on a monthly basis; see "APTTA counterproductive for locals: FPCCI", The Nation, July 27 2010, [www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/27-Jul-2010/APTTA-counterproductive-for-locals-FPCCI](http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/27-Jul-2010/APTTA-counterproductive-for-locals-FPCCI); see also Alexander Sodiqov, "Iran to build cement plants in Tajikistan", CACI Analyst, 2 February 2011

<sup>164</sup> UNODC ROCA Tajikistan sub-office, mission to Nizhni-Pianj Bridge, January 2010

<sup>165</sup> Drug detection dogs cannot be used extensively on cement shipments in that the inhaling of large amounts of lime can be detrimental to their health; UNODC ROCA Tajikistan sub-office, mission to Nizhni-Pianj International Bridge, January 2010.

<sup>166</sup> In February 2009, Customs officers at the Nizhny Panj Bridge discovered 22 kg of heroin and 8 kg of raw opium hidden in the bags of cement shipped from Afghanistan.

Previous investigations of Nizhny-Panj by UNODC suggested that many independent traffickers did not cross the actual bridge, but rather crossed the river by boat and then connected with the road serving Nizhny-Panj on the other side, in Kumsangir district. At the same time, research in Afghanistan indicated that traffickers working together do make use of the official crossing to move large loads of heroin. The recent arrests on narcotics smuggling charges of high-ranking Tajik officials within the department for combating drug trafficking,<sup>167</sup> may be one indication of this invisible traffic. Encouragingly, such arrests will likely help to deter others from partaking in drug corruption.

The other official crossing is Ai-Khanum in Farkhor district (Tajikistan), bordering Takhar province in Afghanistan. Law enforcement sources reported that most illegal exports, including narcotics, circumvent the crossing point.<sup>168</sup> Armed groups of Afghan smugglers carry shipments of 10-60 kg of heroin on makeshift rafts or dinghies across the river into Tajikistan. These traffickers may be transporting other narcotics and mixed seizures of hashish, heroin and opium are not uncommon. According to DCA officials, once across the border smugglers hike by foot 5-6 kilometres to remote villages where the heroin is stockpiled until onward trafficking. According to the same sources, smugglers are each paid US\$200-300 per river crossing.<sup>169</sup> Traffickers that can afford it, pay off Afghan border guards and police officials to facilitate trafficking. In some cases, officials are themselves responsible for the trafficking, as attested by recent arrests in Dash-i-Qala district of Takhar.<sup>170</sup>

#### **Type of makeshift boat used for trafficking across the Panj River (Afghan side)**



*Source: UNODC*

There are recent indications that Tajik citizens cross into Afghanistan to purchase narcotics, suggesting good cooperation and trust between traffickers. For the most part, deals between Afghan and Tajik traffickers are settled by phone, a process facilitated by the availability of Afghan and Tajik mobile services on both sides of the border, as well as the availability of satellite phones, but more importantly made possible by a shared language.<sup>171</sup> This, much more than a shared ethnicity, is the true facilitating factor in cross-border trafficking. As shown below, Tajiks represent the majority in only one Kunduz district, Aliabad, which does not border Tajikistan. In the key Imam Sahib district, Uzbeks are the majority both

<sup>167</sup> Two senior police officials detained in Tajik south on drug trafficking charges, Asia-Plus news, 17 October 2011

<sup>168</sup> Interviews DEA, CNPA, UNAMA, June 2010

<sup>169</sup> UNODC mission to Kurgan-Tube and Kulob, 14 November 2009

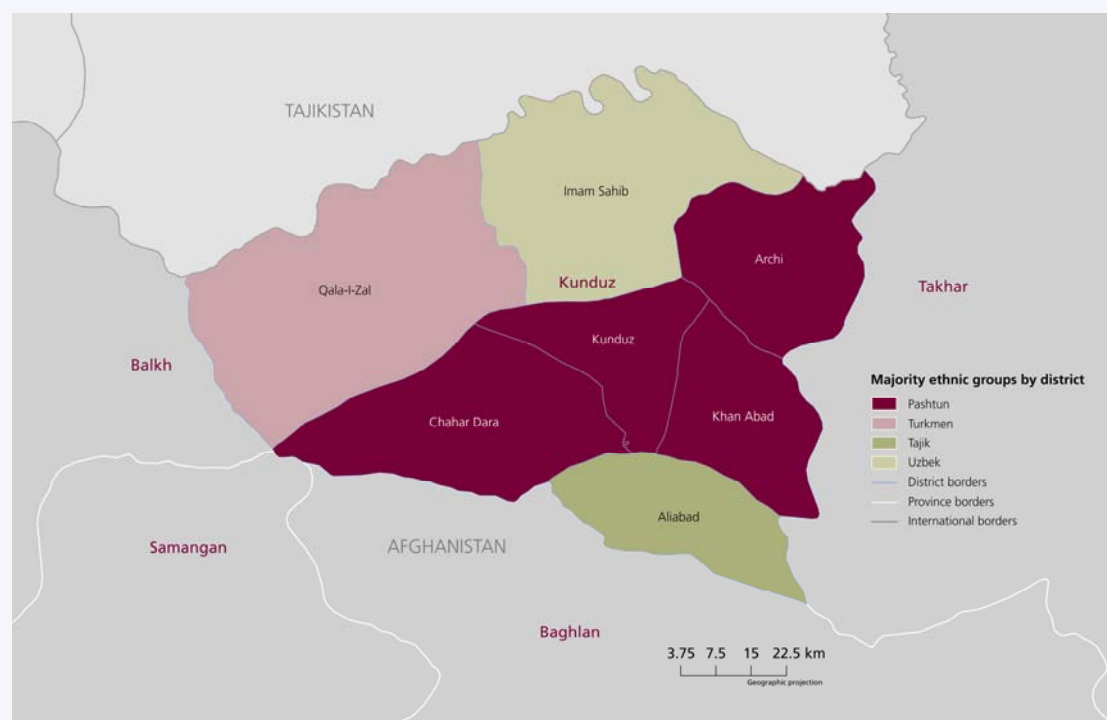
<sup>170</sup> On 4 July 2011, the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) announced that a district police chief and two of his subordinates were sentenced to 20 years in prison by an appellate court for drug trafficking. The convicted policemen served in the Dasht-i-Qala district in northern Takhar province. They were detained on charges of trafficking 15 kg of heroin and misusing their authority.

<sup>171</sup> Mission to Kunduz, April 2010



numerically and in terms of influence over the drug trade.<sup>172</sup> In another border district, Qala-I-Zal, ethnic Turkmens are the overwhelming majority. Linguistic links appear to be a more important variable than ethnicity in terms of understanding trafficking on this section of the border. Profit is, of course, the ultimate driver.

**Figure 19: Ethnic composition by district in Kunduz province**



Source: Afghanistan Ministry of rural rehabilitation and development, UNAMA. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The payment process is generally the same across the length of the border and usually involves cash payments. In some cases, when traffickers are linked by family ties, drugs may be sold on loan and in these cases the volumes are generally small. In organized trafficking schemes, lots are sold in US\$ 100,000 amounts, which depending upon the negotiated price translates into 35-50 kg of heroin for the buyer.<sup>173</sup> In some cases, Tajik traffickers will barter with Afghans for vehicles - sometimes stolen in the Russian Federation. This has also been observed in Tajikistan where UNODC officers report that 6 kg of high quality heroin is “worth one land cruiser”. In another case of barter, some drug traffickers send alcoholic beverages from Tajikistan as part of the payment.<sup>174</sup>

#### *Tajikistan: the eastern flow and border crossings*

The eastern flow is smaller in volume and travels through the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) in the area between the Tem and Ishkashem border points. This is the traditional opiate route to Osh, Kyrgyzstan. GBAO has been economically depressed since independence and virtually cut off from the rest of Tajikistan, having its own police, military and tax systems. GBAO is somewhat distinct from the rest of Tajikistan,

<sup>172</sup> The district of Imam Sahib is dominated by an Uzbek clan (the Ibrahimis) and the main power brokers in the province are ethnic Uzbeks; Interview by UNAMA, June 2010.

<sup>173</sup> Interview, Drug Control Agency Liaison Officer for Takhar Province, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, January 2011

<sup>174</sup> There has been a visible increase in the number of alcohol seizures in the north since 2010.

hosting seven different Pamiri groups speaking many different Persian dialects. Among these are the Ismailis, who are Shia Muslims and followers of the Aga Khan. The difference in poverty rates with the rest of Tajikistan is stark. Around 84 per cent of the population on average are below the poverty line in GBAO, versus 45 per cent in the rest of Tajikistan.<sup>175</sup> Economic activity is mostly related to livestock herding and mining, and most residents live a subsistence lifestyle. The remote region makes up around 45 per cent of the country's land area, but represents only 3 per cent of the population (approximately 200,000).

**Panj River near the border with Ishkashem with Tajikistan on the right and Afghanistan on the left**



*Source: UNODC*

Crossing the border is particularly difficult in winter and most traffic, illicit or otherwise, occurs during the warmer months. No seizures have been recorded at Gorno-Badakhshan crossings. This may be linked to trade flows which are too light to conceal any substantial drug movements, averaging five Tajik trucks a week. Collusion on one or both sides of the border is also a possibility.<sup>176</sup> For example, in 2011, the Tajik DCA arrested a member of the Afghan Border Police trying to smuggle heroin into Shughnan district.<sup>177</sup>

Ishkashem is the main crossing point in the province. The port has a Customs presence and is also the connecting node from Afghanistan to both China and Kyrgyzstan. According to locals, a portion of traffickers circumvents this official crossing, preferring to cross the river at the many illegal crossing points. From Ishkashem, the river becomes relatively narrow (30–75 metres) and fast flowing with stretches of turbulent white water. Foot crossings are possible and enable traffickers to simply wade through the river with small to moderate size shipments. Given the ease of crossing and the remoteness in certain sections, these shipments can aggregate into significant volumes.

Central government control is weakest in Gorno-Badakhshan, which impacts law enforcement results. In 2010, the entire province accounted for just 2 per cent of total seizures in Tajikistan,<sup>178</sup> leading the Tajik DCA to starkly conclude that Gorno-Badakhshan is the only region of Tajikistan where seizures of all drugs decreased.<sup>179</sup> The DCA has opened two offices in the region, but intelligence on shipments remains rare. While reporting the

<sup>175</sup> [amcu.gki.tj/eng/images/stories/nds\\_en.pdf](http://amcu.gki.tj/eng/images/stories/nds_en.pdf)

<sup>176</sup> Interview, BOMNAF official, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 2011

<sup>177</sup> "Tajik police seize batch of heroin from Afghan officer", BBC Monitoring, 22 December 2011

<sup>178</sup> DCA of Tajikistan 2010 report

<sup>179</sup> DCA of Tajikistan 2010 report





lowest seizures in the country, the province also has the lowest and most stable opium prices. This can suggest steady supplies of opium and in this context the low seizures highlight weaknesses in counter-narcotics law enforcement.

**Figure 20: Opium prices in Tajikistan by province (US\$), 2006-2009**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

Linguistic links greatly facilitate communication between Tajik and Afghan traffickers, but in Gorno-Badakhshan Ismaili<sup>180</sup> connections run much deeper and are concentrated around border areas. These cross-border links were unearthed following the fall of the USSR and were strengthened during the time of instability in both countries (including a civil war in Tajikistan), when armed groups moved back and forth between the two. In Afghanistan, Ismailis make up the overwhelming majority of the population in border districts like Shegnan, Eshkeshem and Wakhan.<sup>181</sup> Ismaili villages in adjacent Tajik districts like Darwaz (around the Kalai Khumb crossing) and Shughnan (Khorog crossing) are closely interconnected with villages on the other side of the border.<sup>182</sup> Shootouts with traffickers are rare, almost unheard of on this section of the border. Drugs are trafficked and stored in border villages until further movement is organized, usually towards Murghab and further to the Kyrgyz border. Transporters on this section of the border reportedly pocket around US\$ 100-150 per kg of heroin.<sup>183</sup> Bribes to Afghan border officials add to the cost if traffickers choose border crossing points or monitored areas.<sup>184</sup>

The remoteness of this border proved to be facilitating another form of intrusion. In 2009, the insurgency plaguing northern Afghanistan spilled over into Tajikistan with foreign and Tajik fighters led by the late Mullah Abdullah<sup>185</sup> crossing the border into GBAO.<sup>186</sup> The

<sup>180</sup> Pamiris are considered 'Tajik' by the authorities in Dushanbe, but they are widely viewed as a separate ethnic group, differing from Tajiks in terms of language, religion and culture. Pamiri languages are a south-eastern branch of the Iranian language family. Additionally, while most Tajiks are Sunni, Pamiris are followers of the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam. They refer to themselves as Badakhshani or Pomir in their own languages. Because none of the Pamiri languages are written, Pamiris use Tajik in many aspects of daily life. Pamiris live mainly in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, and are divided into several linguistic groups: Shughnanis and Wakhi in the western and central parts of the province, and Darwazi and Yazgulami in the north; see Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Tajikistan: Pamiris, 2008: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749c9e37.html> [accessed 23 November 2011]

<sup>181</sup> Badakhshan SMU area report, AREU, 2001, [www.areu.org.af/uploads/EditionPdfs/001-SMU%20Area%20Report-Badakhshan.pdf](http://www.areu.org.af/uploads/EditionPdfs/001-SMU%20Area%20Report-Badakhshan.pdf)

<sup>182</sup> UNODC ROCA border assessment, September 2006

<sup>183</sup> AOTP interview in Badakhshan with CNPA

<sup>184</sup> UNODC Mission to Kunduz (April 2010), Badakhshan

<sup>185</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2011/04/110418\\_mullo\\_adullo.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2011/04/110418_mullo_adullo.shtml)

militants all crossed into central (Darwuz) or eastern Tajikistan (Shipad area) and continued into Tajikabad district (Jirgatal) with some crossing into Kyrgyzstan's Batken province. There are no observed links with drug trafficking and such incursions may even have the opposite effect of increasing the presence of law enforcement and military in the area, making crossing more difficult for traffickers. It does however serve to highlight the porosity of sections of the Tajik and Kyrgyz borders (see next section on Kyrgyzstan).

Tajikistan also faced a related emergency situation the following year. On August 23, 2010, 25 individuals including citizens of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, managed to escape from a prison in Dushanbe. The majority of the prisoners were sentenced for terrorist activities and/or affiliation with extremist movements. According to CARICC analysts, the extensive counter-terrorist operations which ensued "negatively affected the amount of time and efforts that could have been spent on counter-narcotics activities in the third and, probably, fourth quarter of 2010."<sup>187</sup>

In 2011, Tajikistan continued to grapple with militancy, which now includes suicide bombings. According to a deputy Prosecutor-General of Tajikistan, 196 militants were detained, of which 168 were convicted in 2011. Most of those detained are reported to be members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).<sup>188</sup> This seems to be an increase over 2010 when 38 IMU members were detained in the country.<sup>189</sup> DCA officials have reported arresting several traffickers who turned out to be IMU members,<sup>190</sup> although this is yet to be confirmed officially.

### *Regional logistics*

Once across the Tajik-Afghan border, some direct deliveries continue to destination in the Russian Federation, but most small to medium size shipments are consolidated and repackaged further downstream in Dushanbe<sup>191</sup> or northern Tajikistan. This is partially supported by seizure data, which shows that the largest single seizures in Tajikistan are not made at the border but downstream. Shipments are then trafficked further into Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. The following main overland routes have been used since the 1990s and are listed in order of importance:

- Pyanj district → Kurgan Tyube city → Dushanbe city → Khudjand city → Isfara → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Shurotabad district → Kulyob city → Dushanbe city → Khudjand city → Isfara → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Shegnan → Murghab → Sary Tash city (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Darvoz → Murghab → Sary Tash city (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city

<sup>186</sup> Interview UNDSS Tajikistan

<sup>187</sup> Interview CARICC analyst, January 2012

<sup>188</sup> Information provided by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 23 January 2012

<sup>189</sup> "Active IMU member detained", 13 December 2010, en.ca-news.org/news/275151,

<sup>190</sup> Tim Gaynor, "Analysis - Shifting Afghan drug trade threatens Central Asia", January 18, 2011, uk.reuters.com/article/2011/01/18/uk-afghanistan-drugs-analysis-idUKTRE70H1R620110118

<sup>191</sup> According to information from the UNODC Tajikistan field office (2010), drive time from Dushanbe to the bridge is approximately 3.5 hours. The distance is approximately 210 kilometres. There are police checkpoints scattered throughout the road system that serve to deter crime and inspect vehicles for illegal goods that are not professionally concealed within the vehicles/trucks. The Drug Control Agency (DCA) maintains a checkpoint in the area around the town of Dusti, located approximately 22 kilometres north of the bridge.



- Shurotabad → Kulyob → Dushanbe → Garm → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh
- Pyanj → Kurgan Tyube city → Dushanbe city → Uzbekistan

Although these shipments are primarily organized using the road networks, trains are once again seeing an increase in the number of seizures.<sup>192</sup> The largest Tajik seizure reported in 2010 consisted of 119 kg of heroin seized in northern Sughd province on a train destined for St. Petersburg, Russia.<sup>193</sup> The direct rail line from Kulob to Moscow has also been targeted.<sup>194</sup> Tajik trains travel through Uzbekistan, where the bulk of seizures are effected (see Uzbekistan section) rather than upstream in Tajikistan or downstream in Kazakhstan. The Russian Federation also continues to make large heroin seizures on trains originating in Tajikistan. The largest in recent memory is a November 2010 joint operation conducted by the Tajik DCA and the Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) resulting in the seizure of 300 kg of opiates including 179 kg of heroin and 1 kg of opium in St. Petersburg. Another noteworthy heroin seizure is the 80-kg shipment confiscated in August 2009 by the Customs officers of Astrakhan on a train on the Dushanbe-Moscow route.<sup>195</sup> Some opiates are trafficked into Europe. In October 2011, two seizures of around 5 kg each were carried out, involving heroin trafficked by cargo trains from Tajikistan to destinations in Europe including Lithuania in one case.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, a portion of opiates is sent to the Russian Federation and other destinations by air. This method usually involves small amounts of high-purity heroin concealed in body cavities (0.5-1 kg) or in luggage (1-5 kg), using increasingly sophisticated concealment methods.<sup>197</sup> For traffickers this is less challenging logistically than a long overland trek across Central Asia, but there is substantial upfront investment involved, consisting of up to US\$ 1,000 to pay the transporter and US\$ 800-1,000 for an air ticket to the Russian Federation. Profit margins are still very attractive, taking into account that 1 kg of heroin can be sold for at least US\$ 20,000 (wholesale price) in Moscow, while the same kilogram generates only US\$ 4,000 in Tajikistan. In 2009, one attempt to traffic heroin by air to the Russian Federation involved 14 kg of heroin, which would have resulted in a gross profit of US\$ 280,000 for the trafficker.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>192</sup> "Tajik police seize large shipment of heroin on train bound for Russia", BBC monitoring, May 2000

<sup>193</sup> 2010 ROCA

<sup>194</sup> The train runs from Moscow's Kazanskiy railway station to Kulob on Tuesdays and Fridays

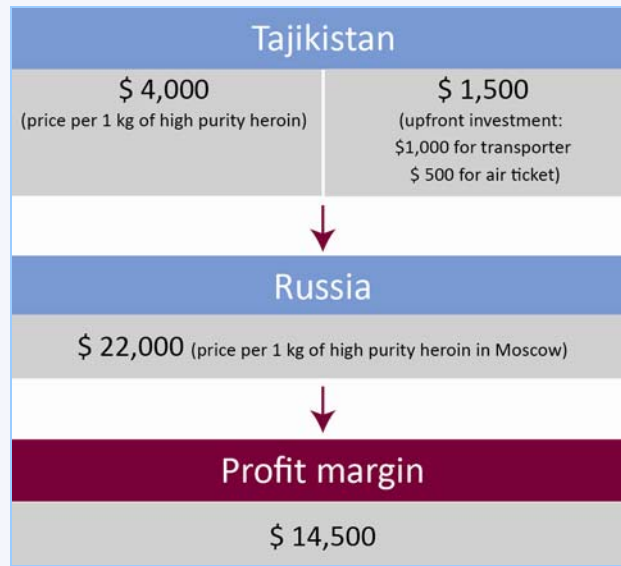
<sup>195</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.57

<sup>196</sup> <http://www.regnum.ru/news/society/1450057.html>

<sup>197</sup> One drug courier from Tajikistan attempted to traffic over 5 kg of heroin into Moscow, concealed in artificial apples; Interfax, 1 July 2011

<sup>198</sup> "Tajik customs officers seize 14 kg of heroin at Dushanbe airport", *RIA Novosti*, 27 February 2009

**Figure 21: Potential profit from trafficking 1 kg of heroin from Tajikistan to Russia by air**



Source: UNODC

Air trafficking is estimated to account for approximately 8-10 per cent of trafficking to the Russian Federation. Around 80 per cent of the heroin trafficked by air comes from Tajikistan. There are flights to Moscow departing twice weekly from Kulob in southern Tajikistan, in addition to international connections in Kuyrgan Tube and Khudjand (see Annex). The best air connections are from the capital Dushanbe with direct flights to five cities in the Russian Federation (as well as Kazakhstan, Iran, Dubai, China and Turkey). Most Central Asian drug flights originate in Tajikistan. Widespread unemployment and low wages in Tajikistan translate into an increasing availability of couriers for drug flights. The average monthly salary in Tajikistan is US\$ 100, while one drug flight alone can bring revenues of up US\$ 1,000. Such glaring disparity between licit and illicit activity creates an obvious incentive for employed and unemployed alike. Traffickers target primarily unemployed women,<sup>199</sup> as they are particularly vulnerable.

Whether by air, rail or road, corruption plays the main role in lubricating drug routes into and through Tajikistan. The incentive is obvious given the huge sums involved. UNODC estimates that in 2010 traffickers in Central Asia made 1.4 billion in net profit from heroin sales. Much of this profit was likely incurred by Tajik traffickers, given that Tajikistan is estimated to handle most of the flow. The economy in Tajikistan relies on two revenue streams, commodities and remittances. When compared with the value of its two primary export commodities (aluminium and cotton) the drug trade looms large. For example, total aluminium exports (accounting for more than 50 per cent of total exports) were valued at US\$ 589.5 million.<sup>200</sup> The other main source of income, remittance flows (US\$ 2.40 billion in 2010)<sup>201</sup> has been affected by the economic downturn in the Russian Federation and

<sup>199</sup> Interview, DCA analyst, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, August 2011

<sup>200</sup> News.tj/en/news/value-tajikistan-s-aluminum-exports-decreases-some-us500-mln-2009

<sup>201</sup> Interview, World Bank, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 2011; see “Migrant Remittances to Tajikistan. “The Potential for Savings, Economic Investment and Existing Financial Products to Attract Remittances”, ILO, 2010.



Kazakhstan.<sup>202</sup> Simply because there are so few revenue streams to tap into, it is easy to see how an economy like Tajikistan's could become highly dependent on the drug trade. In the country's most impoverished areas like GBAO and Khatlon,<sup>203</sup> drug money is likely a lifeline for isolated communities.

The Tajik economy has been growing but not at a level which can explain the country's ongoing construction boom. Observers believe that drug money is fuelling abnormally high property prices in Dushanbe and in the provinces. Other signs of great wealth are visible, including lavish houses and vehicles that are well beyond the means of the public servants who own them.<sup>204</sup> Widespread corruption also poisons the perception of people's relations with the police, bureaucrats and politicians. Almost half of the Tajik population believes that the majority of officials take bribes.<sup>205</sup> A recent public opinion survey found that law enforcement agencies were perceived as the most corrupt state body in Tajikistan in a list which unfortunately includes the state anti-corruption agency.<sup>206</sup> This has an obvious impact on police work; law enforcement officers in Tajikistan have repeatedly announced knowing the identities of the major drug traffickers, but they have not stated why they have chosen not to arrest them. Many arrest figures consist therefore of small time dealers and often desperately poor couriers.

At the same time, Tajikistan has made progress in several sectors including governance, poverty reduction,<sup>207</sup> police reform<sup>208</sup> and border management.<sup>209</sup> Since 2004, the Tajik DCA has posted liaison officers in northern Afghanistan and joint operations with the CNPA have been successfully conducted. Encouragingly, arrests of mid-level officials on drug trafficking charges are increasingly being reported.<sup>210</sup> Corruption is also publically acknowledged as a problem at the highest levels. A 2011 survey on corruption was prepared by the Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Undoubtedly, Tajikistan is not alone in struggling with corruption, a problem shared by all countries in the region. That said, the combination of poverty, weak governance and extremist violence make the situation of Tajikistan virtually identical to that of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, which happens to be the main destination for opiates transiting Tajikistan.

<sup>202</sup> Report No. 54677-TJ, Republic of Tajikistan Country Economic Memorandum, Tajikistan's Quest for Growth: Stimulating Private Investment, January 2011, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit Europe and Central Asia Region

<sup>203</sup> Poverty incidence in Tajikistan is highest in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) and Khatlon regions (respectively 62 and 54 percent in 2009) and lowest in Dushanbe (34 percent); see World Bank, "International development association program document for a proposed grant in the amount of sdr 6.4 million (US\$ 10 million equivalent) to the Republic of Tajikistan for a fifth programmatic development policy grant", Report No. 59123-TJ, 6 May 2011.

<sup>204</sup> The average monthly wage of public servants in Tajikistan amounts to US\$ 110 while that of high-ranking public servants is approximately US\$ 500; see "Average monthly wage of public servants amounts to little more than 500 Somoni", Asia Plus, 13 April 2011

<sup>205</sup> "Corruption in Tajikistan: public opinion", Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan & UNDP Tajikistan, 2011

<sup>206</sup> "Corruption in Tajikistan: public opinion", Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan & UNDP Tajikistan, 2011, p.28

<sup>207</sup> World Bank, "International development association program document for a proposed grant in the amount of sdr 6.4 million (US\$ 10 million equivalent) to the Republic of Tajikistan for a fifth programmatic development policy grant", Report No. 59123-TJ, 6 May 2011.

<sup>208</sup> Interview OSCE Tajikistan, September 2011

<sup>209</sup> US State Department, Country Report on Terrorism (2010).

<sup>210</sup> "Three top Tajik police officials arrested for drug trafficking", 16 January 2012, <http://www.universalnewsires.com/centralasia/security/viewstory.aspx?id=11164>; "В Душанбе задержан сотрудник налоговых органов с 8 кг героина", 19 января 2012, [www.ca-news.org/news/876811](http://www.ca-news.org/news/876811)

**Map 20: Drug routes, insecurity and vulnerable sections of the Tajik and Kyrgyz border**

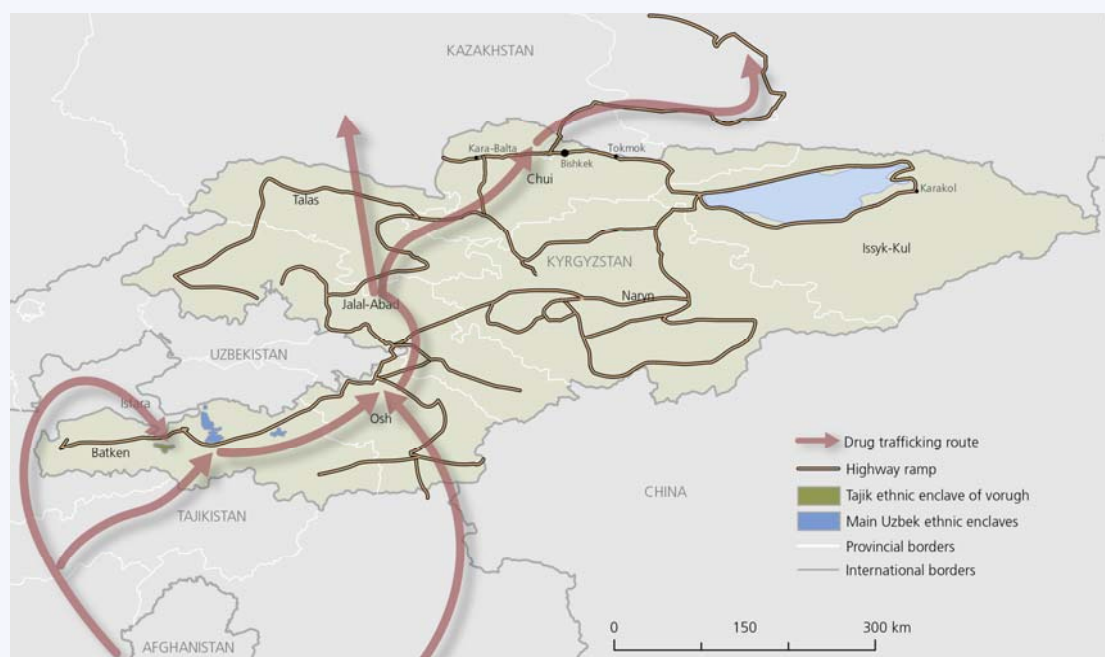


Source: UNODC, DCA of Tajikistan. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



## To Kyrgyzstan

**Map 21: Main drug routes and transportation corridors in Kyrgyzstan**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Most of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan cuts across rough terrain that is difficult to control, with the most vulnerable sections bordering Sughd province in northern Tajikistan. From Dushanbe, the largest portion of the western opiate flow travels into Sughd province towards Isfara district. In addition to its role as an opiate transit area, Isfara district is linked to and has witnessed much of the IMU and other extremist violence that has taken place in recent years. This district is also a potential flashpoint for inter-ethnic conflict.<sup>211</sup> Whether from Isfara or other border districts, most of the flow crosses into Batken province in Kyrgyzstan. This Kyrgyz province is a key transit and forwarding point straddling 430 km of disputed borders.<sup>212</sup> In some sections, there is literally no border and more importantly no border control.<sup>213</sup> As a recent UNDP report notes, “The unmarked and almost non-existent border lines cause confusion even amongst the law enforcement agencies themselves.”<sup>214</sup> Appropriately enough, Tajik citizens do not need visas to cross into Kyrgyzstan.<sup>215</sup> Drugs aside, a thriving oil smuggling business estimated at 1,000 tons a day<sup>216</sup> also exists across the same disputed boundary.<sup>217</sup>

<sup>211</sup> “Potential for Peace and Threats of Conflict: Development Analysis of Cross-Border Communities in Isfara District of the Republic of Tajikistan (Vorukh, Chorkhuh, Surkh, Shurab) and Batken District of the Kyrgyz Republic (Ak-Sai, Ak-Tatyr, and Samarkandek)”, UNDP, July 2011

<sup>212</sup> Fully 650 km of the 970-km long Kyrgyz-Tajik border are disputed

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Kyrgyz border guards, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 2011

<sup>214</sup> “Potential for Peace and Threats of Conflict: Development Analysis of Cross-Border Communities in Isfara District of the Republic of Tajikistan (Vorukh, Chorkhuh, Surkh, Shurab) and Batken District of the Kyrgyz Republic (Ak-Sai, Ak-Tatyr, and Samarkandek)”, UNDP, July 2011

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Tajik border guards, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, June 2010

<sup>216</sup> Kyrgyzstan creates centre to stop fuel smuggling, [www.universalnewsires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=10143](http://www.universalnewsires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=10143), 8 September 2011

<sup>217</sup> Tajikistan relies on the Russian Federation for 90 per cent of its fuel imports and smuggling has picked up following the imposition of new export duties by Russia.

The number of Kyrgyz border guard personnel along this section of the border reportedly exceeds two to three times that of Tajik border personnel,<sup>218</sup> but both agencies are accused of corrupt practices. Within Batken province, Kyrgyz law enforcement identifies the Tajik enclave of Vorugh as one major opiate forwarding area before Osh city. One obvious factor is that Kyrgyz law enforcement authorities are not allowed to operate within Vorugh, which administratively forms part of Tajikistan territory although not contiguous to Tajikistan. It is perhaps for this reason that the area was used as a sanctuary by the insurgent group that targeted Tajikistan in 2009.<sup>219</sup>

The other flow, travelling from eastern Tajikistan, enters south-west Kyrgyzstan through the similarly rugged mountainous Pamir region at the Bor Dobur crossing. The route connects to the Kyrgyz town of Sary Tash before reaching the city of Osh, 229 km from Bor Dobur.

Most heroin flows travelling through Tajikistan reconnect in Osh city. The city traditionally seizes the most opiates in Kyrgyzstan. In addition to its role as a drug consolidation point, the city also serves as an arena for extremist recruitment. A recent example concerns the arrest of various Central Asian members of the IMU and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in October 2011.<sup>220</sup> Most arrests related to terrorism in Kyrgyzstan occur in southern Kyrgyzstan (Osh, Batken or Jalalabad).<sup>221</sup> There have long been anecdotal reports that Kyrgyzstan's opiate trade is helping fund arms purchases and other needs for IMU and like-minded groups. Kyrgyz law enforcement is sensitive to this possibility, particularly as it relates to Batken province, but provided no evidence that this was occurring. On some occasions, seizures in Kyrgyzstan involved finding extremist literature along with the drugs; however, this is scant evidence with which to draw any definitive conclusions.<sup>222</sup>

In Osh city, those receiving the opiates organize onward smuggling to Kazakhstan through northern Talas province where a smaller road connects with the city of Taraz in Kazakhstan. Alternatively, the drugs are transported to Bishkek along the country's main road. Once there, there are opportunities to blend into the huge trade flows travelling into Kazakhstan and further to the Russian Federation. Opiate batches are hidden in private automobiles that travel in groups preceded by reconnaissance cars ready to divert the attention of authorities if necessary. Importantly, Kazakh authorities have placed a barbed wire barricade near populated parts of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border and the country reportedly reduced the number of crossing points from 12 to 7.<sup>223</sup> Although the border with Uzbekistan is much closer to the Osh hub, only small shipments are reportedly smuggled for domestic consumption, in either direction.<sup>224</sup> The border with Uzbekistan was permanently and unilaterally closed following inter-ethnic violence in June 2010, which also had an impact on trafficking. Kyrgyzstan also shares two border crossings with China, although UNODC has no recent information on

<sup>218</sup> "Potential for Peace and Threats of Conflict: Development Analysis of Cross-Border Communities in Isfara District of the Republic of Tajikistan (Vorukh, Chorkhuh, Surkh, Shurab) and Batken District of the Kyrgyz Republic (Ak-Sai, Ak-Tatyr, and Samarkandek)", UNDP, July 2011

<sup>219</sup> Information provided by UNDSS Kyrgyzstan, October 2009

<sup>220</sup> "Three "terror plotters" arrested in Kyrgyzstan" BBC monitoring, 26 October 2011

<sup>221</sup> According to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Interior, in 2010 there were 1,128 members of extremist and terrorist organizations in Kyrgyzstan, 83.4 per cent of which located in Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces alone.

<sup>222</sup> CARICC Bulletin N.47

<sup>223</sup> Interview with CARICC Analyst; The crossing points closed are Alatau, Besagash, Aksu/Kamyshanovka, Kegen and Zhayil, "Despite New Obstacles, Locals Find Ways to Cross Kazakh-Kyrgyz Border", Eurasianet, August 17, 2010, [www.eurasianet.org/node/61761](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61761)

<sup>224</sup> Interview, FDCS analysts, September 2011





overland trafficking through the Chinese border. Thus, it appears that the near entirety of opiates trafficked into Kyrgyzstan continue on to Kazakhstan.

The heroin that is seized in Kyrgyzstan rarely retains the original Afghan packaging seen in Tajikistan. This may indicate that heroin seized in Kyrgyzstan is repackaged upstream in Tajikistan. Single heroin seizures in Kyrgyzstan are rarely above 50 kg and generally consist of much smaller volumes; seizures along the Kyrgyz borders are negligible to non-existent. In 2010, 159 kg of heroin were seized, along with a virtually insignificant seizure of 39 kg of opium. Kyrgyz law enforcement concedes that these volumes constitute only a small part of the overall flow transiting through Kyrgyzstan. Difficulties in making significant seizures have long been a feature of the law enforcement regime in Kyrgyzstan. This continued flow invisibility is unsurprising given the country's corruption-prone environment obvious in day-to-day life in the cities and rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. For underpaid public service officials this can range from accepting payment in exchange for not inspecting vehicles to acquitting those traffickers who are arrested by the police. This permeates throughout society as reported in the local press<sup>225</sup> and verbally by concerned law enforcement officials.

Corruption aside, trafficking is also dependent on stealth and traffickers use a wide array of concealment methods to avoid detection. This includes dissolving heroin in liquid as attested by a record 44-kg seizure in 2009.<sup>226</sup> In such cases it is likely that high quality opiates are being transported to the country of destination, rather than being sold on the local market. Opiates transiting Kyrgyzstan are also trafficked on commercial airlines, using couriers. The key destination remains the Russian market,<sup>227</sup> but neighbouring western China is also targeted.<sup>228</sup> Two Kyrgyz airports offer international connections, namely Manas International Airport in Bishkek and Osh International Airport. There are regular international flights between Manas International Airport and China, Germany, India, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.<sup>229</sup> A Drug Profiling Unit has been established at Manas International Airport with mixed results. Osh International Airport represents an obvious target for traffickers given its proximity to supply routes. From Osh, there are regular flights to Moscow, St-Petersburg, Novosibirsk in the Russian Federation and Urumchi in China. Seizures at both airports range from 1 to 5 kg on average, although larger seizures (12-15 kg) involving sophisticated concealment methods have been reported at Osh airport.<sup>230</sup> One method to avoid X-ray scanning reportedly involves wrapping the heroin with carbon paper.<sup>231</sup> No cases of using airfreight to conceal heroin consignments have been reported to date, but the State Service on Drug Control (SSDC) suspects that this also occurs.

<sup>225</sup> "Two Kyrgyz district judges arrested on corruption charges" AKI press, 3 February 2012, "Crime rate on rise among Kyrgyz police officers", <http://eng.24.kg/>, 9 February 2012; Erica Marat, "police faced with new Kyrgyz 'thief in law' after a two-year break", Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 5 Issue: 98; 22 May 2008

<sup>226</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.58

<sup>227</sup> Russian drug mule held with heroin in Bishkek airport, <http://en.trend.az/regions/casia/kyrgyzstan/1615974.html>, 11 January 2010

<sup>228</sup> This was the case in 2007 when Chinese police arrested a Pakistani courier carrying 4 kg of heroin into Urumqi.

<sup>229</sup> [www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2437\\_kyrgyz.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2437_kyrgyz.pdf)

<sup>230</sup> On 18 May 2009, officers of Border Service and State Customs of Kyrgyzstan prevented drug smuggling on board of a flight 475 en route "Osh - Moscow". Checking the hand luggage of two passengers (a citizen of Kyrgyzstan and a citizen of Uzbekistan) revealed 12.5 kg of heroin concealed in 13 plastic parcels and A4 file folders wrapped in window tinting films and hidden in false bottoms of the luggage. Specialists claimed this concealment method has not been known before and it is difficult to detect even with the use of technical means; CARICC information bulletin, 8 June 2009.

<sup>231</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.33

Most seizures are effected on roads, but 2010-2011 also saw small seizures of heroin<sup>232</sup> (2-5 kg) and much rarer opium seizures (20-30 kg) on trains<sup>233</sup> originating in Kyrgyzstan. Currently, the Kyrgyzstan railway system has one line continuing on to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in Moscow, Novosibirsk and Yekaterinburg.<sup>234</sup>

The country's rail system is set to undergo major expansion; the governments of China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have agreed in principle to set up a regional rail line.<sup>235</sup> Once these links are fully operational, the amount of illicit drugs smuggled by rail through Kyrgyzstan may increase unless commensurate capacity upgrades in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are undertaken. Indeed, this trade expansion presents clear opportunities for traffickers both of in terms of logistics and access to new markets, notably China. Finally, the possibility of Kyrgyz membership in the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus raises more questions than answers given the current uncertainty surrounding the impact of this agreement on trafficking.<sup>236</sup>

However, the most evident opportunities for traffickers have risen from the political instability which has plagued Kyrgyzstan, starting with the 2005 Tulip revolution and continuing with the tragic inter-ethnic conflict in June of 2010. Following the 2005 Tulip revolution and lasting until 2009, a number of criminal bosses were assassinated in Kyrgyzstan. This violence -of the kind generally associated with Latin American drug markets- was not a classic turf war between rival gangs. It appears rather to have been a takeover orchestrated at the highest political levels<sup>237</sup> whereby criminal networks gradually came under the control of high-ranking officials.<sup>238</sup>

A clear indication of this new direction was the disbanding in late 2009 of the country's independent Drug Control Agency (DCA), which had increasingly set its sight on high-level targets.<sup>239</sup> The following year, political protests in April and ethnic pogroms in June both directly and indirectly facilitated traffickers in their operations. Indirectly, uncompromised law enforcement had no choice but to shift the focus away from drug trafficking to contain the violence and instability resulting from both events. Directly, some of the inter-ethnic violence in June 2010 appears to have been criminally motivated as Kyrgyz politico-criminal organizations<sup>240</sup> successfully chased ethnic Uzbek criminal groups out of southern Kyrgyzstan.<sup>241</sup> A report from the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) analytical unit concludes: "It has to be acknowledged that the reduction in the number of registered drug-related crimes and seizures in Kyrgyzstan is affected, for the most part, by political events within the country."<sup>242</sup> Kyrgyz seizures dropped by half in 2010 (see chart below), reaching their lowest point in seven years.

<sup>232</sup> In November 2011, 2kg of heroin were seized on the Bishkek-Moscow train leading to the arrest of two Kyrgyz nationals; "Kazakh border guards seize over 2 kg of heroin from Kyrgyzstan-Russia train", *Interfax*, 12 October 2011

<sup>233</sup> "Over 30 kg of Russia-bound opium netted in Kyrgyz capital", *Interfax news agency*, May 2011

<sup>234</sup> [www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2437\\_kyrgyz.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/tipub2437_kyrgyz.pdf)

<sup>235</sup> [www.adb.org/Documents/Environment/KGZ/42399/42399-02-kgz-ciaab.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Environment/KGZ/42399/42399-02-kgz-ciaab.pdf)

<sup>236</sup> [www.24kg.org/cis/112006-glavy-pravitelstv-evrazyes-prinyali-reshenie-o.html](http://www.24kg.org/cis/112006-glavy-pravitelstv-evrazyes-prinyali-reshenie-o.html)

<sup>237</sup> Erica Marat, "Bakiyev, the security structures, and the April 7 violence in Kyrgyzstan", *CACI Analyst*, 28 April 2010, [www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5316](http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5316)

<sup>238</sup> Interview, Kyrgyz DCA, September 2011

<sup>239</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: A Hollow Regime Collapses", *ICG, Asia Briefing N°102*, 27 April 2010, p. 8.

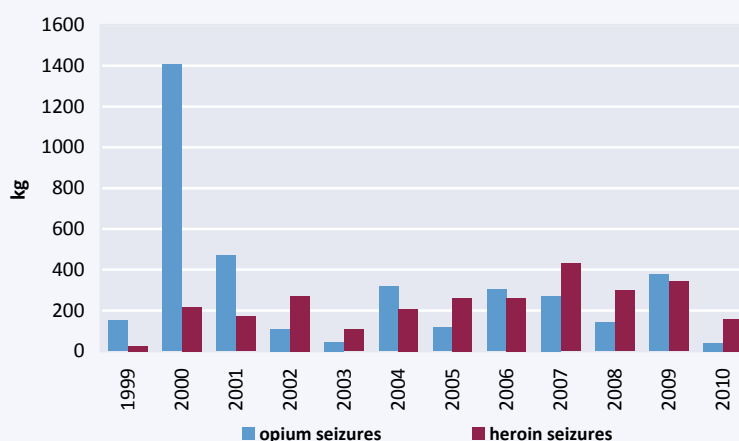
<sup>240</sup> "Kyrgyz leader says country under 'great pressure' from drug groups", *AKIpress news agency*, 15 June 2011; see also "Criminal gangs reshuffle amid Kyrgyz unrest", *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, 21 July 2010

<sup>241</sup> Interview, Kyrgyz DCA, September 2011

<sup>242</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.82



**Figure 22: Heroin and opium seizures in Kyrgyzstan 1999-2010**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

There have recently been encouraging signs of a return to normalcy with the prime ministerial elections in November 2011. Heroin seizures have also picked up again in 2011,<sup>243</sup> coinciding with the reinstatement of the DCA (renamed the SSDC) in mid-2010, by current Kyrgyz leader Roza Otunbayeva. Like its predecessor, the SSDC maintains excellent relations with the Tajik DCA and several joint operations have been successfully carried out because of this positive relationship. At the border, it is hoped that the forthcoming establishment of a border guard training centre in Batken will eventually lead to interdictions on Kyrgyzstan's volatile southern borders.

Indeed, the key to maintaining and strengthening this fragile balance lies in southern Kyrgyzstan where the social and economic costs of the June 2010 events are emerging. Increases in already high poverty rates are expected,<sup>244</sup> which could in turn lead to more reliance on illicit revenue. The relationship with crime is a direct one, as one Kyrgyz analyst notes: "Impoverished rural areas are a fertile breeding ground for criminal organizations in Kyrgyzstan. Young men unable to find a job face a choice of going into the army or joining criminal groups, which will guarantee some earnings as well as social status."<sup>245</sup>

The previous Kyrgyz administration is widely denounced as criminal enterprise<sup>246</sup> and most senior regional officials appointed by the ousted president have been fired. One exception concerns elements within the southern political administration, which appear to be highly autonomous from the Presidential office.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, there are strong allegations that these same political structures are acting against and in spite of the central Government's renewed commitment to fight drugs. In its August 2010 report, the International Crisis Group warns against an enduring regional divide: "If the south remains outside of central control, there is a strong risk that the narcotics trade, already an important factor, could extend its power still further, and that the region could quickly become a welcoming environment for Islamist

<sup>243</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.105

<sup>244</sup> "The Kyrgyz republic: the second progress report on the millennium development goals", UNDP, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2010, p.90

<sup>245</sup> Erica Marat, "Police faced with new Kyrgyz 'thief in law' after a two-year break", Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 5 Issue: 98; 22 May 2008

<sup>246</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: Moscow Slams Bakiyev Officials for Trafficking Drugs", Eurasianet, 22 February 2011, [www.eurasianet.org/node/62931](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62931)

<sup>247</sup> For example, the mayor of Osh has reportedly stated that Bishkek's authority does not extend to Osh; see "More Trouble Brewing in Kyrgyzstan: Osh Boss Defying Bishkek", Eurasianet, August 19, 2010, [www.eurasianet.org/node/61773](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61773)

guerrillas.”<sup>248</sup> Indeed, in southern Kyrgyzstan, economic, social and political insecurity tend to occur simultaneously with a mutually reinforcing convergence.

### To Kazakhstan

**Map 22: Main drug routes and transportation corridors in Kazakhstan**



Source: UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Seizure volumes in Kazakhstan are surprisingly low, considering that Kazakhstan is the last country crossed before the drugs enter the destination markets in the Russian Federation. Almost 90 per cent of seizures in Central Asia are made before the heroin reaches Kazakhstan. Apart from a brief spike in 2008, Kazakh seizures have averaged less than 1 per cent of the total estimated flow transiting the country. In 2009, the country seized 730 kg of heroin. In 2010 it had seized less than half of this figure (323 kg). This is reason for concern, given that 70-75 tons of heroin are estimated to have been trafficked through Kazakhstan in 2010. Smaller volumes are seen in opium seizures, which totalled 168 kg in 2010. Opium seizures in 2011 fell to historic lows totalling only 9.5 kg for the first three quarters of 2011 (a 95 per cent decrease).<sup>249</sup> As shown on the map below, seizures virtually disappear in Kazakhstan only to reappear in the Russian Federation.

<sup>248</sup> “The pogroms in Kyrgyzstan”, ICG, Asia Report N° 193 – 23 August 2010, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/193%20The%20Pogroms%20in%20Kyrgyzstan.pdf>  
<sup>249</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.105, 7 November 2011



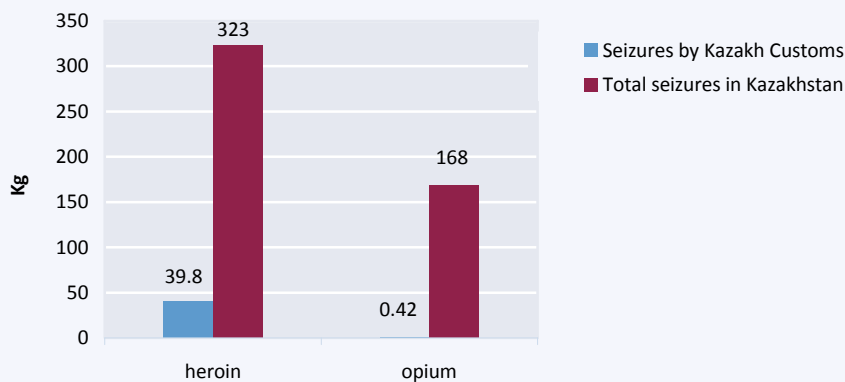
**Map 23: Heroin seizures in Central Asia, 2010-2011**



Source: UNODC, UNESCAP. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Low seizures partly reflect the country’s difficulties of policing and monitoring a long border (3,600 km). Crossing on foot or horse is common in more isolated areas of the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. Vehicles can also bypass official border checkpoints with reasonable ease, as there is a low risk of detection in many border areas. Seizures made in Kazakhstan usually consist of small to medium size shipments. By contrast, the Russian Federation regularly seizes large shipments tracked to Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. As in Kyrgyzstan, few seizures take place at the Kazakh borders (see figure below). Once heroin has been trafficked through the initial border crossing, only good intelligence or good luck will expose a large shipment, suggesting this route is exceedingly well organized.

**Figure 23: Distribution of opiate seizures by Customs and other seizing agencies in Kazakhstan (2010)**



Source: CARICC, UNODC

In theory, long borders should be partly mitigated by the fact that Kazakhstan has the best-paid, best-trained and best-equipped border control officials in the region. As an example, the 2009-2011 Program on Combating Drug Addiction and Narco-Business in Kazakhstan prioritized further strengthening the southern border with inspection equipments - scanners, sniffer dogs and drug test kits.<sup>250</sup> Counter-narcotics divisions of the Ministry of Interior have also been provided with three mobile scanning machines for the inspection of trucks in the south-Kazakhstan region and in Kyzylorda, Almaty and Zhambyl provinces. It should be noted however that the quality of the equipment can vary. During a UNODC visit to border crossings in the region of north Kazakhstan, Kazakh officials mentioned a recent large heroin seizure (trafficked by a truck) made on the Russian side of the border. The truck had been scanned on the Kazakh side, but only the Russian scanner had been able to identify the concealment of drugs inside the truck. The officer explained that the Kazakh side of border control has a scanner of poorer quality compared to the more reliable one at the Russian crossing.<sup>251</sup> This should not detract from the fact that receiving bribes simply to look the other way during border crossings is also a reality at the various entry points across Kazakh borders.

It remains unclear whether transit traffic is checked at the Kazakh border, but the current volume of trade from neighbouring Uzbekistan is high and continues to grow.<sup>252</sup> Kazakh and Russian officials cannot check each and every load. One of the most enduring means of concealing drugs is within shipments of fruits and vegetables directed to the Russian Federation.<sup>253</sup> These are a major import product for the Russian Federation, but Kazakhstan is not an exporter which means most of this supply is in transit from other Central Asian countries - and to a lesser extent China.<sup>254</sup> Uzbekistan, for example, exported 200,000 tons of fresh fruits, vegetables and dried fruits to the Russian Federation in 2010 - a 50 per cent increase since 2009. In Tajikistan, 96 per cent of fruits and vegetables produced are destined for the Russian market.<sup>255</sup> In 2011, the largest seizures using this modus operandi were effected in the Russian Federation and had travelled from Kyrgyzstan through Kazakhstan. There are thus ample opportunities for traffickers to blend drugs into trade flows and traffic large loads into the Russian Federation through Kazakhstan; for instance, a truck hauling 20 tons of fruit can hide hundreds of kilograms of heroin.

<sup>250</sup> See [depzdrav.gov.kz/loader/load/756](http://depzdrav.gov.kz/loader/load/756) and [online.prg.kz/Document/Default.aspx?doc\\_id=30436008&sublink=100](http://online.prg.kz/Document/Default.aspx?doc_id=30436008&sublink=100)

<sup>251</sup> UNODC mission to north Kazakhstan, September 2011

<sup>252</sup> Kazakh envoy notes increasing trade with Uzbekistan. BBC Monitoring International Reports; 5 October 2011

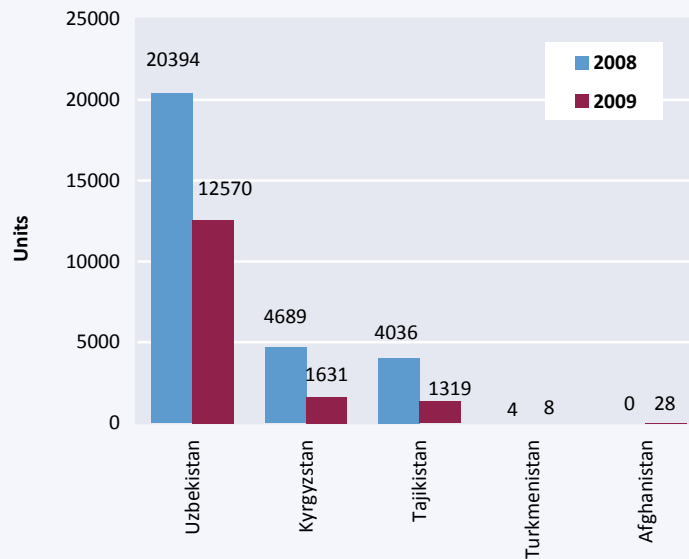
<sup>253</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.53

<sup>254</sup> Berkum S. Van and L. Dvortsin, "Implications of the establishment of a Customs union between Kazakhstan, Belarus and the Russian Federation for the Dutch Agribusiness", LEI Memorandum, [www.wur.nl/NR/rdonlyres/120B2CEA-B722-4300A744E051101D4DC0/140022/LEInota\\_11061\\_Customs\\_union.pdf](http://www.wur.nl/NR/rdonlyres/120B2CEA-B722-4300A744E051101D4DC0/140022/LEInota_11061_Customs_union.pdf)

<sup>255</sup> Gilles Walter, "International Comparative advantages of Tajikistan in the agro-food sector", International Agribusiness Investment Forum, 18-19 October 2011



**Figure 24: Transit of multimodal containers through Kazakhstan by country of origin (units), 2008-2009**



Source: USAID, *Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs Project (RTLCC)*

There are strong suspicions among law enforcement that traffickers are increasingly using the International Road Transport Convention system (TIR) to transport narcotics through Kazakhstan in seemingly sealed trucks.<sup>256</sup> TIR trucks operate according to the international Customs system and are not subject to Customs control for tax purposes. The risk is that the seal can be tampered with and drugs placed and removed at any point during the trajectory. If Customs has reasonable suspicion and no drugs are found upon inspection, the concerned law-enforcement agency will bear all expenses and reimburse all damages incurred by the transporter. This is a highly de-motivating factor for law-enforcement officers and here the importance of scanners is obvious. That said, Customs does not have the capacity to scan every single load, making intelligence sharing and regional cooperation a necessary complement to ‘hard’ border control measures. A possible indication that current measures are insufficient is that many law enforcement officials are actually clamouring for reconsideration of the rules of the TIR Convention, to allow for inspection of vehicles.<sup>257</sup>

As of 2011, Russian and Kazakh Customs are no longer operating on the Russian-Kazakh border (6,850 km), in line with the Customs union agreement between the two countries and Belarus. Thus, Russian border controls can now join Kazakh agencies in monitoring Kazakhstan’s borders with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. On paper, this constitutes a significant strengthening of the Kazakh border regime. It could also enhance cross-national cooperation between Customs Union members in the gathering and sharing of intelligence. However, assessing the actual impact is difficult at the time of this writing given that complete 2011 seizure data is unavailable.

Once across the border, the immensity of the state and the number of possible road routes across the country present a major challenge for national authorities. From Kyrgyzstan, a major route starts in Bishkek before crossing the border into Korday (Kazakhstan) toward

<sup>256</sup> Interview CARICC, June 2010

<sup>257</sup> 2009 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 27 February 2009

Almaty and onward to Ayaguz via Georgievka and Ust-Kamenogorsk and into Russian territory. Again from Bishkek, a second route passes through Almaty then onwards through Saryshagan, Balkhash, Karaganda, Astana, Kokshetau and Petropavlovsk before reaching Russian territory. A third route runs westward from Bishkek into Taraz via Symkent-Kyzylorda, Aktobe and Uralsk into Russian territory. Southern Kazakhstan, Almaty City and eastern Kazakhstan are the only places in Kazakhstan with reasonably consistent opiate seizures, reflecting their centrality to trafficking operations. For the most part, shipments appear to move directly through Kazakhstan although one often mentioned convergence point is the city of Karaganda, which straddles the major route.<sup>258</sup>

Although Kyrgyzstan is the most vulnerable neighbouring state, a record-breaking 537-kg heroin seizure made in Kazakhstan in 2008 was in transit from Uzbekistan. The shipment was scanned and seized by Customs on the border with the Russian Federation.<sup>259</sup> Since then, no seizure made in 2009-2010 has exceeded 55 kg and most are significantly smaller.<sup>260</sup> The largest seizure reported in 2011 was effected in southern Kazakhstan and consisted of 36 kg of heroin. The key entry point for traffickers on the Uzbek-Kazakh border is Shymkent, considered a strategic node for drug trafficking. With a sizeable Uzbek population, Shymkent city is 100 kilometres from Tashkent and has come to resemble Osh in its importance as a regional drug trafficking centre. It has also drawn comparisons with Osh due to the growth of extremism in the city and the wider region. As of 2011, militants were considered active across Kazakhstan and the first suicide bombing in the country's history was reported.<sup>261</sup>

According to Kazakh officials, 90 per cent of drugs trafficked through the country are transported by road or rail.<sup>262</sup> For their part, Russian FDCS officials have publically stated that the majority of drugs is trafficked into the Russian Federation by rail.<sup>263</sup> The well-developed rail network through Kazakhstan thus appears to be both targeted and vulnerable. Rail networks are an efficient means of transport and popular method of drug trafficking. At the same time, the fixed nature of rail networks allows authorities greater interdiction opportunities than with vehicles. Nevertheless, whereas Uzbekistan continues to make numerous seizures of heroin bound for Kazakhstan and further to the Russian Federation, the tally for Kazakhstan and neighbouring Kyrgyzstan is limited.

According to Chinese law enforcement officials, trains are also a confirmed means of heroin traffic into the westernmost Xinjiang province and some recent arrests on the rail line between eastern Kazakhstan and Urumqi appear to support this.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, although drug flights from Kazakhstan into the Russian Federation are rarely - if ever- reported, it should be noted that there are records of heroin being shipped by air from Afghanistan or Pakistan into Kazakhstan and further to China.<sup>265</sup> Given the increasing demand for Afghan heroin in China and the developing commercial links with Kazakhstan, this supply route will likely expand.

<sup>258</sup> CARICC information bulletin n.32

<sup>259</sup> Interview, CARICC, 2009

<sup>260</sup> ROCA Drug Situation Report, 2011

<sup>261</sup> "Suicide bomber attacks security police in Kazakh city", Reuters, 17 May 2011

<sup>262</sup> Interview with CARICC analyst, June 2010

<sup>263</sup> Narcotics trafficked into Russia mainly by rail - drugs tsar, Interfax news agency, 14 December 2010

<sup>264</sup> "Kazakhstan Train Attendant Arrested for Possessing Heroin", <http://thechina.biz/china-economy/kazakhstan-train-attendant-arrested-for-possessing-heroin/>

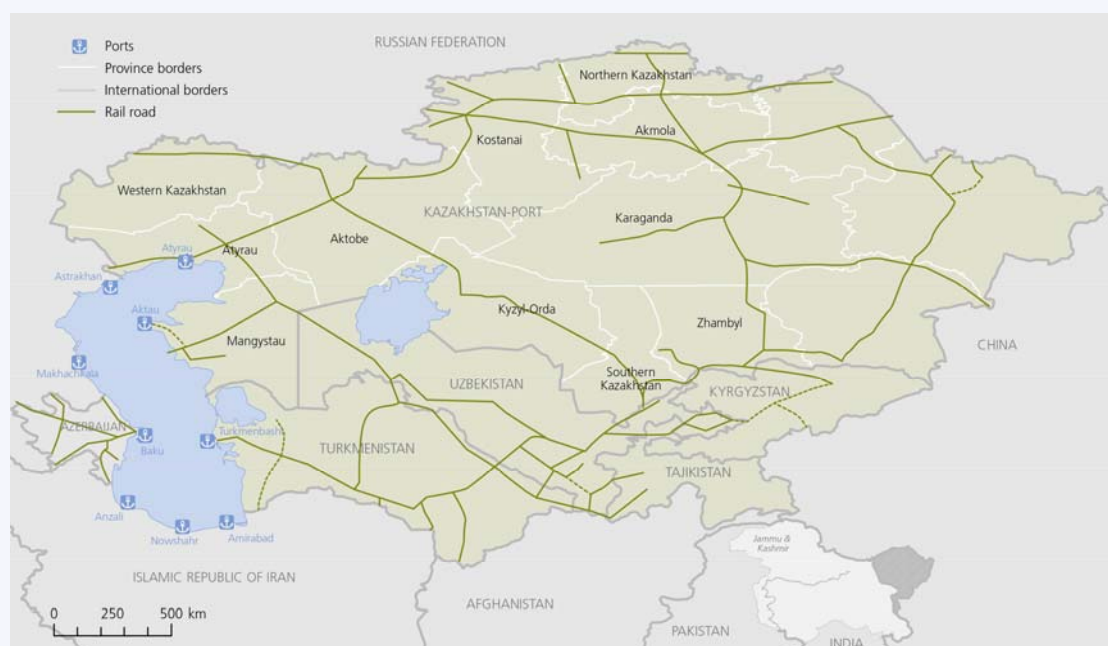
<sup>265</sup> "Channel of contraband of Afghani heroin liquidated", Kazakhstan today, 6 May 2009, [www.kt.kz/index.php?lang=eng&uin=1141192228&chapter=1153485290](http://www.kt.kz/index.php?lang=eng&uin=1141192228&chapter=1153485290)





Missing from the picture is Turkmenistan, which shares a remote and largely forgotten 379-km border with Kazakhstan. As previously mentioned, a handful of heroin shipments sourced in Iran were destined to be trafficked through Kazakhstan in 2009. That said, UNODC is not aware of any heroin or opium shipments having crossed Turkmenistan, headed toward Kazakhstan in 2010-2011. Land routes aside, the Caspian seaports of Aktau and Atyrau in Kazakhstan could potentially create incentives for traffickers in other Caspian coastal countries given the seaports' integration in extra-regional transport infrastructure.

**Map 24: Regional rail network and Caspian seaports**



Source: UNESCAP, UNODC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### A general decreasing trend?

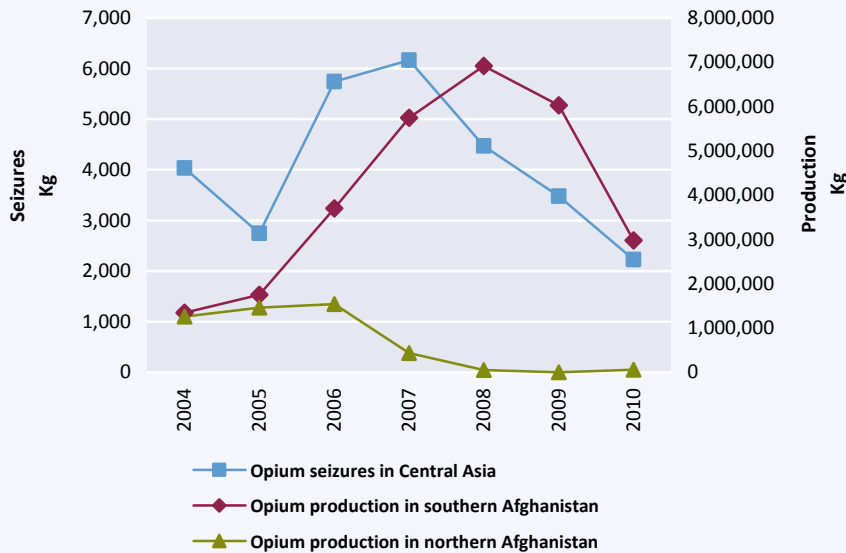
In 2010, approximately 2.6 tons of heroin were seized in Central Asia, less than 4 per cent of the total flow transiting the region. All Central Asian countries, with the exception of Uzbekistan, registered a decrease -some by more than 50 per cent when compared with 2009.

Overall, Central Asia is also seizing 50 per cent less opium than a decade ago, but these seizures are more volatile than in the case of heroin. The rise in seizures in 2003-2007 shown in the figure below is likely attributable to increased production in northern Afghanistan during that period,<sup>266</sup> on the strong assumption that this region is the main supplier of opium for Central Asia. One supporting indication is that opium seizures in Central Asia abruptly dropped by a quarter in 2008, never to recover. That same year, southern Afghanistan reached the highest production volumes in its history. Opium seizures in Central Asia were in effect decreasing, while southern overproduction was increasing towards its peak production volumes. Seizures of opium in Central Asia were much more consistent with northern production which began to decline in 2007. As of 2011, opium seizures across Central Asia appeared to continue along the same decreasing trend, while in southern

<sup>266</sup> The abrupt drop in 2005 seems out of place and coincides with the first year in a decade that the Tajik border was not protected by the Russian Border Service. Opium seizures in Tajikistan fell by more than 50 per cent that year, but later recovered and surpassed totals for the previous five years.

Afghanistan opium production had increased by nearly 1,000 tons. This may indicate that northern Afghanistan is not strongly influenced by southern Afghan opium inputs. It also supports the lack of seizures or intelligence in Afghanistan, pointing to southern opium moving northward.

**Figure 25: Total opium seizures in Central Asia compared against opium production in northern Afghanistan and southern Afghanistan, 2004-2010**



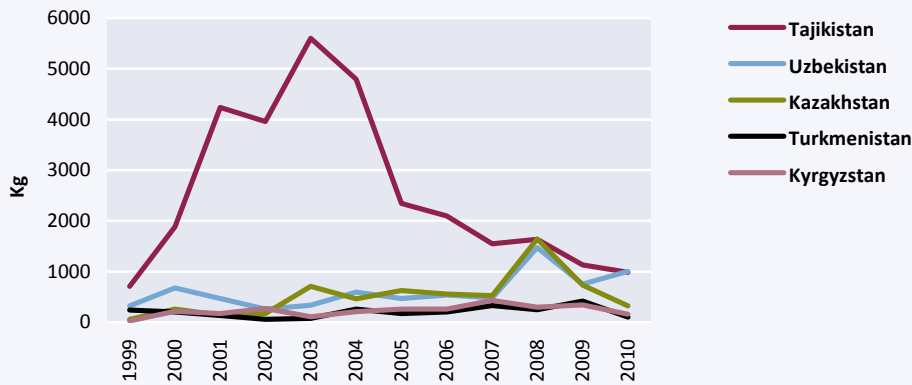
Source: UNODC

As previously stated, a partial explanation for decreasing seizures may also be political instability and insecurity in key transit states like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Although this case can be made over a one-year period in Kyrgyzstan (2010), steady declines in seizures have been observed in Tajikistan for the last six years.<sup>267</sup> In 2010, Tajikistan reached its lowest total heroin seizures in a decade (985 tons) and worryingly this occurs despite the country’s significant investment in law enforcement capacity and border management. It has also been advanced that some heroin routes have shifted away from the Tajik border to other Central Asian countries. There are however no indications that Turkmenistan is receiving and exporting more heroin or that Uzbekistan is receiving heroin from anywhere but Tajikistan.

<sup>267</sup> An initial 50 per cent drop in 2005 is most likely linked to the departure of the Russian border guards in 2004 (a ten-year bilateral agreement on joint protection of borders with the Russian Federation ran out in 2003).



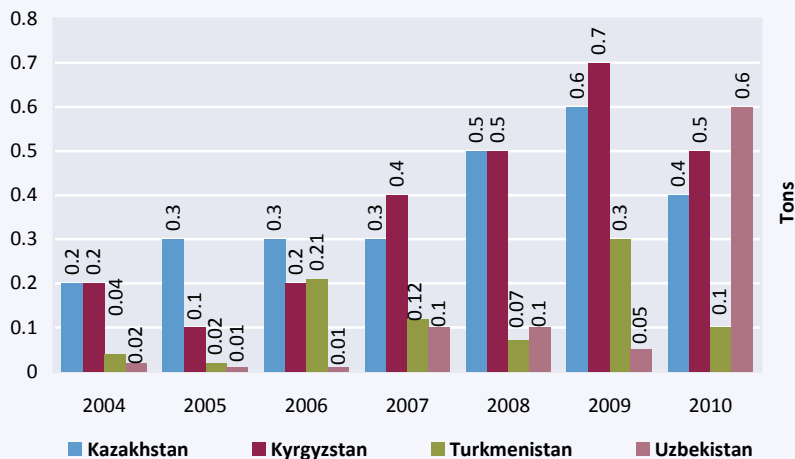
**Figure 26: Heroin seizures in Central Asia 1999-2010**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

Although heroin is the drug of highest value trafficked from Afghanistan, between 2004 and 2010 hashish seizures in Central Asia grew by 250 per cent with all countries reporting huge increases.<sup>268</sup> In that period, the largest increase was recorded in Uzbekistan (+3,270 per cent), followed by Kyrgyzstan (+226 per cent), Turkmenistan (almost +200 per cent), and Kazakhstan (+70 per cent).<sup>269</sup> The chart below shows the sharp rise in hashish seizures in Central Asia concomitant with the drop in opium production and the rise in cannabis cultivation across the border, notably in Balkh. Perhaps heralding the emergence of a new international route, in June 2011 officers of the Kazakh National Security Committee [NSC] in Almaty found 5.7 tons of hashish in a railway container of construction materials travelling from Afghanistan via Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The shipment was to travel further to Europe and North America and the group involved had reportedly already sent several shipments using the same route.<sup>270</sup>

**Figure 27: Hashish seizure trends in Central Asia (excluding Tajikistan), 2004 - 2010 (in tons)**



Source: UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia

<sup>268</sup> Tajikistan does not report hashish seizures separately, yet only provides cannabis seizures as a whole.

<sup>269</sup> ROCA 2010

<sup>270</sup> "Kazakh police bust ring smuggling Afghan drugs to North America, Europe", BBC Monitoring, 20 December 2011

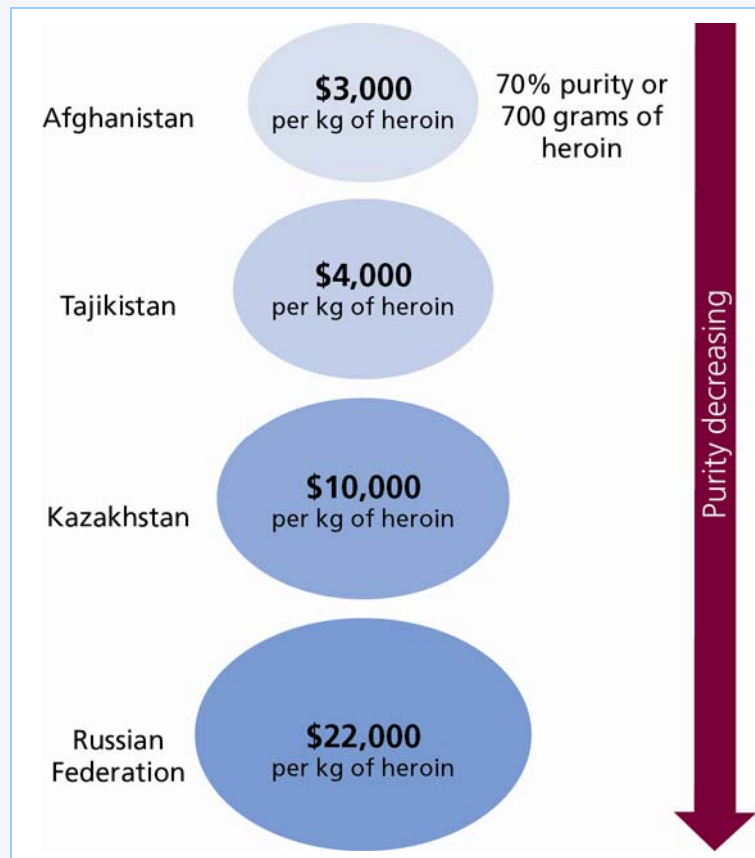
## Profits and beneficiaries

### Profits

This points to the actual revenue that illicit actors are pocketing from the regional trade. It is important to note that profits made from trafficking Afghan opiates into Central Asia (USD 344 million) in 2010 are dwarfed by the net profit pocketed by criminals trafficking onwards to the Russian Federation, which was around US\$ 1.4 billion in 2010. This calculation does not include other drugs such as those of the cannabis group, which are also trafficked through the region.

The mark-up on heroin brought into Central Asia and sold in the Russian Federation is as much as 600 per cent. As shown in the figure below, as prices increase purity decreases; this is explained by the growing distance from the source and by the practise of cutting the heroin with adulterants. This means that 1 kg of heroin at 70 per cent purity can become 2 kg at 35 per cent purity. This inversely proportional relationship between price increase and decrease in quality translates into greater profits for traffickers.

**Figure 28: Heroin price and purity on the Northern route (2010)**



Source: UNODC

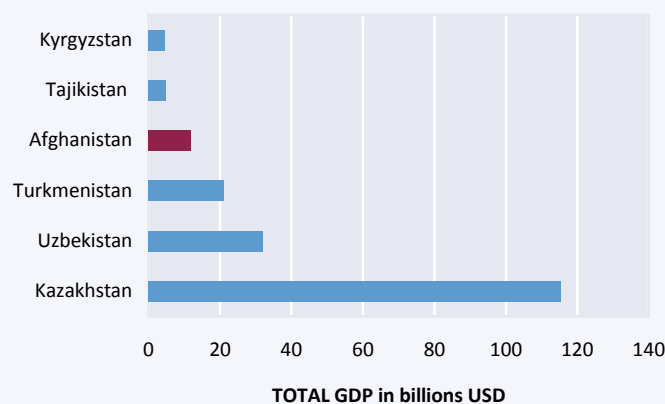
With a net profit of US\$ 1.4 billion from the heroin trade alone, in 2010 drug traffickers earned the equivalent of a third of the GDP of Tajikistan (US\$ 4.58 billion) or Kyrgyzstan,<sup>271</sup> but only 5 per cent that of Uzbekistan (US\$ 28 billion) and 1 per cent of that of Kazakhstan. The economies of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan appear to be the most vulnerable

<sup>271</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>



in Central Asia, while in Kazakhstan the entire amount would constitute a very small part of total economic activity.

**Figure 29: GDP of Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, 2010**



Source: World Bank

## Beneficiaries

It is difficult to define a profile for beneficiaries, as criminal groups can vary in size, level of organization and structure, and can be nationally or internationally based. It is clear, however, that a diverse range of actors operate the drug trade within Central Asia. These actors range from large-scale crime networks capable of organizing the trafficking of hundreds of kilograms of heroin down to small-scale and mid-size operators. Whether big or small, networks in Central Asia have historically been built upon kinship and clan ties, as well as the geographic residency of members. A related observation is that Central Asian organized crime groups have very diverse anatomies, some having clear and rigid structures while others being based on loose intangible relationships that develop according to mutual interests. Such is the case of groups forming to carry out a specific operation, for example trafficking a single shipment across the Tajik border.

Of primary interest to this study, the larger organized crime groups controlling the trade in Central Asia are firmly rooted in the region's domestic political, economic and social structures. This is possible through the development of intimate ties between organized crime and state power structures. On some occasions, the power structures co-opt groups or attempt to control the trade, becoming themselves part of the organized crime structures. The possibility of state capture provides a central challenge in combating the threat regionally. An indication of their entrenched power, no major drug kingpin has been arrested in Central Asia since the region's independence in 1991. Although criminal groups are active in every Central Asian country, the countries most at risk are Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

### Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, the drug market is divided between five major loosely grouped factions formed primarily around clan-based ties<sup>272</sup> and coinciding roughly with the country's provinces, or oblasts. One network is composed of members of the Leninobod (or Khojand) clan, particularly influential in the northern part of the country and the most powerful Tajik clan

<sup>272</sup> Tajik clans are not necessarily based on kinship or descent; see Anatoly Michailovich Khazanov, "After the USSR: ethnicity, nationalism and politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States", University of Wisconsin Press, 1995

before the collapse of the USSR. The second faction consists of members of the Kuliab clan in the central region within Khatlon province. During the early years of independence and into the civil war, the Kuliab clan acted both as a conservative source of opposition to the communist leadership in Khojand and an ally against the Islamist and democratic opposition. This clan emerged as the most powerful after the Tajik civil war and is currently considered to be the most influential. Crucially, its influence is strongest in Dushanbe, a major opiate consolidation and forwarding area. The third faction, the Kurgan-Tyube clan, identified with the region of the same name with Khatlon province, is more or less integrated with the Kuliab faction. The fourth faction, the Garm (or Kataregin) clan is based in south-eastern and central Tajikistan (Gorno-Badakhshan), one of the strongholds of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO),<sup>273</sup> which was composed of the Islamic Renaissance Party and other Islamism opposition groups.<sup>274</sup> A fifth faction, the Pamiri, is identified primarily with the Pamir ethnic group of the same name, notably the Ismailis.

These various clans fought both alongside each other and against one another during the civil war and members are now competing for shares of a drug market controlled mostly by members of the Kuliab and Leninabad clans.<sup>275</sup> In differentiating between groups on a regional level, there are clear rivalries with groups based in Khatlon and northern Tajikistan and again with those in Gorno-Badakhshan. Such rivalries over the drug trade are a reflection of the divisions dating back to the civil war and before that to Soviet times. In the current situation, actual confrontation between groups in Tajikistan seems remarkably rare given the violent past. This is, in many other settings, an indication of consolidation and shared control by a few networks. According to one United Nations official, the entire Tajik-Afghan border is effectively divided between clans.<sup>276</sup> Their level of control is such that clans permeate the power structures of the state. Thus, one clan with political power can be overrepresented in key ministries with law enforcement responsibilities.

At the individual level, criminal group leadership is still dominated by former warlords active in the civil war. Many of these joined the political process in the 1990s and many continue to be reliant on illicit economies.<sup>277</sup> These mid-level operators are involved in the drug trade either directly or through taxation, with some overseeing specific territories. This was the case in GBAO, for two ethnic Pamiri groups<sup>278</sup> led by former commanders. Both groups have approximately 20-40 members, operate in Khorog and have international links with groups in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. Indicative of their paramilitary origins in the civil war, these types of groups are highly organized with a single leader, a clearly defined hierarchy and a strong system of internal discipline.<sup>279</sup>

<sup>273</sup> [http://ismaili.net/mirrors/112\\_tajik/tajkethn.html](http://ismaili.net/mirrors/112_tajik/tajkethn.html)

<sup>274</sup> The Pamiri were massacred during the civil war, especially in Dushanbe and in western parts of the country, apparently for being perceived as largely having backed the United Tajik Opposition; see Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Tajikistan: Pamiris, 2008, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749c9e37.html> [accessed 23 November 2011]

<sup>275</sup> For decades Tajikistan was ruled by the northern Leninabadi clan while during the civil war, Leninabadi elite "joined in a new alliance with people from the Kulob region." As the war progressed the balance shifted to the Kulobis; see Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process. Accord, Issue 10 edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catherine Barnes; London: Conciliation Resources, 2001; 100 pp.

<sup>276</sup> Interview, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 7 June 2010

<sup>277</sup> Jonathan Goodhand et al., "Bargain for peace? Aid, conditionalities and reconstruction in Afghanistan", *Netherlands institute of international relations*, August 2006, p.40.

<sup>278</sup> Former chief of the Murghob district's frontier post whose group was active during the civil war

<sup>279</sup> ROCA Research



An interesting distinction is the degree to which organized crime groups in Central Asia have connections to Afghanistan. A common language and the relative ease of crossing the Tajik-Afghan border, when compared to the Uzbek and Turkmen networks, means that some Tajik groups access Afghan production directly. In this context, it is possible that integrated Afghan-Tajik groups have emerged, although so far these seem to consist only of mid to small-scale operations. The Langariev group,<sup>280</sup> a now defunct Tajik trafficking organization led by former field commanders, had 20 per cent of its membership composed of Afghans.<sup>281</sup> Similarly, although the responsibility of most Afghan groups stops at the Afghanistan-Central Asia border, there are increasing drug-related arrests of Afghan nationals in Tajikistan (and Uzbekistan). There have also been drug-related arrests of Afghans in Uzbekistan and even further afield in Kazakhstan. Although linguistic and cultural limitations are mitigating factors, it may be justified to think that Afghans will eventually attempt to do away with the middleman and traffic opiates directly into the Russian Federation.

Trafficking between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is reportedly controlled by mixed Tajik-Uzbek networks, as both ethnic groups span the border on both sides.<sup>282</sup> Logistic operators for these groups appear to be based in the border areas of each country and function by leveraging close family ties. These groups are facing restrictions owing to political tensions on the Tajik-Uzbek border and the concentration of Uzbek agencies along its length. There is little information on the groups controlling the trade inside Uzbekistan. Law enforcement agencies estimated that in 2009 about 20 networks were active in trafficking heroin through the country, and involved Uzbek nationals as well as members of other Central Asian nationalities. For example, the leader of a major regional organization trafficking opiates into the Russian Federation was a Tajik citizen residing in Uzbekistan.<sup>283</sup>

### Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, over time these groups have managed to establish a presence in state structures, including winning seats in parliament and posts in other government bodies. Kyrgyz organized crime is in rapid evolution, reflecting the ongoing political, economic and social changes affecting the country. One important feature is the previously cited north-south divide that runs right through the Kyrgyz socio-political landscape.

According to law enforcement sources, Kyrgyz criminal groups are located in and around the country's main drug trafficking hubs: (1) Talas (north); (2) Bishkek; (3) Issyk-Kyl; and (4) the southern region (including Osh, Batken and Jalalabad and their respective regions).<sup>284</sup> Some geographical differences can be observed: gangs in Bishkek tend to concentrate on racketeering, embezzling state assets or controlling the expanding market of Chinese smuggled goods.<sup>285</sup> Gangs in the southern region tend to specialize in the drug trade. There are numerous drug groups in the south: 12 in the Osh region and city of Osh, including Uzbek and Tajik groups; 7 in the Batken region; 6 in Jalalabad region<sup>286</sup> versus 6 drug-

<sup>280</sup> Langariev is the brother of a prominent pro-government commander during the country's civil war, Langari Langariev, and the son-in-law of Sangak Safarov, who led the pro-presidential National Front movement during the war.

<sup>281</sup> [www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c22523,4565c25f2a5,49e4433823,0.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c22523,4565c25f2a5,49e4433823,0.html)

<sup>282</sup> Interview, Customs Uzbekistan, Border guards, 24-27 May 2010

<sup>283</sup> "Operation Typhoon in Alma-Ata, Chimkent, Karaganda, and Petropavlovsk", <http://arrests.jigsy.com/entries/general/operation-typhoon-in-alma-ata-chimkent-karaganda-and-petropavlovsk-3>

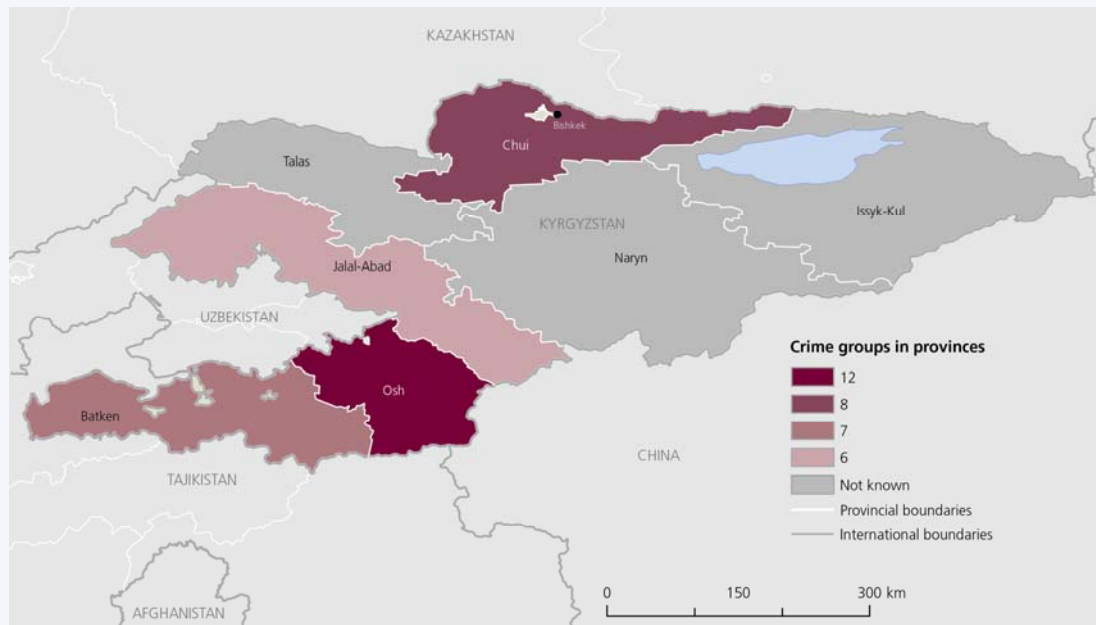
<sup>284</sup> Interview with CARICC analysts, June 2010

<sup>285</sup> "Kyrgyzstan's powerful criminal gangs" Jane's Intelligence Digest, 26 February 2009

<sup>286</sup> Interview with CARICC analyst, July 2011

trafficking groups in Bishkek city (including a Caucasian group and a Roma group) and 8 in the Chuy region (including Chechen groups, Kurdish groups and a Roma group). In all, 40 organized crime groups are estimated to be involved in the drug trade, although not all carry out transnational activities (i.e. Issyk-Kyl based groups). This is the low end of the range as the Russian FDCS reportedly estimates the number of groups to be 70.<sup>287</sup>

**Map 25: Distribution of crime groups in Kyrgyzstan by province, 2011**



Source: CARICC. Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The main power brokers are ethnic Kyrgyz groups based in Osh and Bishkek who are reported to control up to 80 per cent of the criminal markets,<sup>288</sup> following the inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan.<sup>289</sup> A typical structure consists of interdependent and essential component divisions, each with a specialized area of responsibility. Different members act as transporters, financiers and enforcers. At the top is the organizer, now likely to be an ethnic Kyrgyz. Former or current law enforcement officers, usually in the extended family of the organizer, are responsible for facilitating transport. The presence of current and former law enforcement officials<sup>290</sup> in criminal groups makes it difficult to infiltrate and neutralize them.

#### Other countries

Small Turkmen networks with organizational links to both Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran handle the bulk of the traffic through the country. There are few opportunities for transnational drug networks to take root in Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan-based networks are also small,<sup>291</sup> but probably benefit from the best international connections. Kazakh officials often single out Caucasian ethnicities, such as Chechens, as

<sup>287</sup> Anti-drug body says over 70 drug gangs operate in Kyrgyzstan, BBC monitoring, 25 April 2011

<sup>288</sup> Interview with Alexander Zalitschenko, September 2011, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

<sup>289</sup> According to CARICC experts, it is plausible to state that the inter-ethnic clashes that followed the political unrest in the country in 2010 could have been used by drug-trafficking groups, primarily composed of ethnic Kyrgyz, to assume predominance over Uzbek groups in particular and the drug market of southern Kyrgyzstan in general.

<sup>290</sup> This is especially reported in Kyrgyzstan, 24.kg website, 24 January 2011

<sup>291</sup> Interview DEA Kazakhstan, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. September 2011





dominant in international heroin trafficking through Kazakhstan.<sup>292</sup> Other reports have also noted Chechen organized crime groups to be active in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the role of transporters,<sup>293</sup> leaving the identity of the main organizers unclear. Further afield, in the Russian Federation, Tajik citizens appear to dominate the retail market although in some areas such as Siberia, Azeri nationals may be active in the opium trade.<sup>294</sup> At the macro level, leadership is probably still dominated by Russian nationals, but these can come from a variety of ethnic groups. Former sportsmen and military personnel are also reportedly well represented in Russian organized crime.<sup>295</sup> One example is the so-called “Kamorra” group, which allegedly transported drugs from Central Asia to Russia (via Kyrgyzstan using Kyrgyz nationals as couriers). In August 2010 the Federal Drug Control Service detained the head of the group, a Russian national, along with other operatives including former athletes acting as the ‘lieutenants’ of the group. All in all, the group was comprised of around 200 active members and operated at the level of US\$ 0.5 million per month.<sup>296</sup>

Beneficiaries need not necessarily be native to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) or the Afghan rim region. Despite sharing no linguistic or ethnic links, West African groups, dominated by Nigerian nationals, have managed to acquire a small share of the regional drug trade. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, national security officials estimate that such groups control 10 per cent of the heroin trade. Although West Africans were still being arrested at Bishkek airport as of 2011, such groups mostly hire non-African air couriers to traffic drugs into other Asian countries, notably China. These may be locals (mostly women) or foreigners, as evidenced by the arrest of an Azeri citizen in Bishkek who was trafficking heroin to the Russian Federation. West African groups are also very active in countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, although this is not always reflected by arrest figures.

Whether Central Asian insurgents benefit from the drug trade is an open question. The drug terrorism link has emerged in recent years in a variety of theatres including West Africa, India and Afghanistan. With regard to the latter, the Taliban are reported to provide funding to foreign groups, particularly Central Asian ones. Given their confirmed revenue from drug trafficking, it would not be a stretch to claim that the insurgencies that Central Asian countries are experiencing may be indirectly tied to the drug trade. However, despite many declarations and anecdotal reports, there is currently no strong evidence that any Central Asian insurgent group is benefiting directly from the regional opiate trade. Moreover, as witnessed in Kyrgyzstan, the influence of organized criminality on the state is potentially a much wider security threat, which can destabilize large areas and spill over into other countries. It can also lead to potential alliances between criminal and terrorists for political ends. Understanding and countering this nexus should be energizing counter-narcotics cooperation.

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<sup>292</sup> Interview, CARICC officials, Almaty, Kazakhstan, June 2010

<sup>293</sup> Interview CARICC official

<sup>294</sup> Interview CARICC/UNODC, Tashkent, June 2010

<sup>295</sup> Антоян Ю. М., Кудрявцев В. Н., Эминов В. Е. Личность преступника. СПб., 2004. С. 209

<sup>296</sup> Rossiyskaya Gazet, 5 August 2010 <http://www.sfo.fskn.gov.ru/work/id/962/>





## RESPONSE

### The way forward

Efforts to combat the Afghan opiate trade - a common threat to Afghanistan and the Central Asian region- would benefit tremendously from a deepening of regional cooperation. Such cooperation is however complicated by mistrust and ongoing disputes, including on the crucial demarcation of regional borders.<sup>297</sup> Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the more vulnerable countries in Central Asia and the most pressing border problem is the boundary between those two countries. Neither country can allot significant resources to border regime management. Focused external assistance and advice would provide an important boost to the process of establishing safe and established borders between the countries.

In both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan large parts of the political and law enforcement establishment are seriously undermined by direct or indirect involvement in the drug trade. Yet, these two countries are often the most open to observation and cooperation. The Tajik DCA and the Kyrgyz SSDC, two agencies with strong mandates, are probably a model for bilateral collaboration in the region. Support to these two agencies, including in facilitating their bilateral relations, should be extended and may have a knock-on effect elsewhere in the region. The Tajik DCA has also established liaison officers in northern Afghanistan and maintains excellent and productive relations with the Afghan CNPA in that area. This is another bilateral initiative that can be replicated with other Central Asian countries, whether or not these border Afghanistan.

The current multinational instruments (often due to extra-regional impulses) are the efforts of several regional security and counter-narcotics mechanisms, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC). These efforts are encouraging and indicative of a raised level of awareness towards transnational threats. Of concern is that in counter-narcotics, regional cooperation remains partly confined to rhetoric

<sup>297</sup> Kyrgyzstan has unresolved border disputes with Tajikistan (in the Isfara Valley to the south-west) and with Uzbekistan (on the status of Uzbek enclaves in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere along the common border). Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan has yet to ratify the 2001 border delimitation with Kazakhstan. Due to the ongoing negotiation process with neighbouring states, as much as 30 per cent of the border line in Kyrgyzstan has not been delimited and remains almost uncontrolled.

when implementation is needed. At the moment, CARICC is the dedicated law enforcement body focused on providing a working platform for intelligence sharing and joint operations. However, this is not being utilized to its full potential and some countries do not share operational information or enter into multilateral operations. The unfortunate truth is that criminals cooperate much better than law enforcement agencies in the region, despite a ready platform at the disposal of those countries.

By contrast with counter-narcotics cooperation, countries already recognize the need for a regional response to terrorism. This is evident in the formation of the SCO and the CSTO. Both of these regional security organizations have integrated counter-narcotics to varying degrees and a deepening of cooperation<sup>298</sup> with CARICC may be warranted and achievable.<sup>299</sup> This cooperation would however likely yield better results were Afghanistan more involved at the observer level or given full member status in these bodies, CARICC in particular.

Deepening counter-narcotics cooperation with Afghanistan may yet prove to be the biggest hurdle to reaching efficient regional strategies for combating the drug trade. There is a lack of communication, notably between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan -which has not impacted the growing economic cooperation between the two countries- as well as between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The issue of trust is common and one that in the past has placed limits in formal counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism exchanges between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. The many challenges facing Afghanistan, including the shortcomings of its public service and border control system, are well noted and documented. At the same time, in recent years very concrete steps have been taken to advance meaningful drug control in the country. In order for these initiatives to take root and become sustainable, Afghanistan will have to be integrated in regional structures. For their part, Afghan officials could also consider making use of the CARICC to initiate joint operations and controlled deliveries on the Northern route, something that so far has not been requested by Afghan authorities. Proactive Afghan law enforcement could have a powerful effect on energizing regional counter-narcotics efforts with Central Asia.

Afghanistan cannot bear alone the burden of neutralizing what is a CIS-wide threat. In line with the principles of shared responsibility and a balanced approach to reducing supply and demand, consumer markets (including in the Russian Federation, which creates the strongest pull) need to continue strengthening their own efforts to reduce opiate consumption within their borders and alleviate the devastating impact on health. On the supply side, it is important for destination countries among others to continue supporting the capacity of Afghanistan to integrate regionally through the mechanisms already established for this purpose.

The challenges and lacunae in counter-narcotics cooperation are in contrast to the relatively smooth and more productive cooperation between regional countries in economic and trade initiatives. Trade agreements (exemplified by EurAsEc and the recent Customs Union), the expanding transportation routes such as the current rail connection between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and the construction of three additional rail lines in Afghanistan, are all

<sup>298</sup> [http://www.caricc.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=164&Itemid=1&lang=english](http://www.caricc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=164&Itemid=1&lang=english)

<sup>299</sup> "Protocol of cooperation was signed between CARICC and SCO", <http://www.unodc.org/centralasia/en/news/protocol-of-cooperation-was-signed-between-caricc-and-sco.html>



occurring at an increasing pace. The reason is simple; such agreements are in line with the interests of the countries that enter into them.

Long-term counter-narcotics cooperation can thus only develop if the countries recognize that this is in their best interest. In that regard, better outreach and public relations on the part of CARICC are crucial. Much more can be done to raise awareness of the advantages of regional counter-narcotics cooperation and the crucial role that CARICC can play in facilitating this. It is important to ensure a common strategic vision, which would be developed through CARICC in a participatory manner, involving all countries, including Afghanistan. This approach would instil a sense of ownership in participating countries, ensuring commitment and active engagement. Just as important are the cases that CARICC can detail involving controlled deliveries of narcotics and subsequent arrests. These show the benefits that result from mid-level intelligence and operational –albeit still limited– regional cooperation. Since 2008, CARICC has coordinated a total of 23 international operations on the Northern route to Russia, Europe, China and Canada, which led to the arrest of 46 persons, including organizers and active members of organized crime groups.<sup>300</sup>

There is added urgency for countries to step up cooperation in light of the fluidity with which routes can be used, the responsiveness of organized criminals to law enforcement activity and the increasing trade flows. When states cooperate, the results are evident as shown by the 300 kg of heroin seized through joint efforts by Tajik and Russian law enforcement in 2010. Clearly, ‘hard’ border control measures alone are not sufficient and such restrictions can also be countered by smuggling or unofficial payments. There are of course a few specific nexus points where opiate routes converge. The areas of Batken and Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan continue to play a key role in sustaining the Northern route and the efforts of the central Government to exercise its legitimate authority over the full expanse of its territory should be supported.

While it is possible that smuggling feasibility has increased in line with the multiplication of transport links and the escalation of international trade, border controls should also not undermine the potential of these initiatives to boost Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the entire region’s legal economy, helping to lift it out of poverty. In developing responses, the challenge is to mitigate the negative flows of opiates without affecting the positive flows of trade and commerce. Indeed, trade liberalization does not have to run counter to the fight against transnational trafficking if regional counter-narcotics cooperation initiatives are acted upon and accompanied by intelligent policing and customs practices. Economic and counter-terrorism cooperation are several steps ahead of counter-narcotics. The challenge is to map and measure the multiple dimensions of narcotics impacts, from economic to health to security, in order to improve awareness of the urgency to act. It is important that countries in the region recognize and address this transnational threat before it creates more considerable damage.

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<sup>300</sup> CARICC Operational Unit, January 2012





## ANNEX

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### I. Methodology

This report is based on fieldwork conducted in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2011. The information used to map trafficking routes in and through northern Afghanistan was derived from UNODC assessment missions, the seizure database of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), open source material and informal sources. With the aim to obtain background information on seizures and routes and to identify the types and sources of available data, the researchers interviewed headquarters officials at the Customs General Directorate of Afghanistan, the Afghan Border Police, the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan, various diplomatic missions, UNODC opium poppy surveyors and analysts from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), to name a few.

This qualitative data was combined with quantitative data from survey results (UNODC Afghan opium surveys 2005-2009) and flow calculations reported in the UNODC 2011 world drug report, which estimates that approximately 25 per cent of Afghan opiate production is trafficked in Central Asia. These estimates will be assumed valid for 2010 and 2011 until additional data becomes available. Available demand data was used as the key variable to estimate the size of heroin and opium flows on the Northern route. The robustness of demand data varies from country to country and is subject to revision and changes. Most countries in the region still lack structured or organized data collection systems capable of producing scientifically sound demand, supply and seizure statistics. Accordingly, the statistics and estimates provided on heroin/opium demand and opiate flows should be viewed as work in progress and the best current approximations given the data available. This first analysis by UNODC should therefore be considered a starting point for future research. The Afghan Opiate Trade Project<sup>301</sup> plans to continue to update the findings and analysis of the report as the situation evolves and new data is made available.

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<sup>301</sup> The Afghan Opiate Trade Project is a UNODC research effort designed to inform the drug control response to illicit trafficking in Afghan opiates.

## II. Uzbekistan Airways route network

Domestic	CIS	International
Andijaan	Almaty	Amritsar
Bakhura	Astana	Athens
Fergana	Ashgabat	Bangkok
Karshi	Baku	Beijing
Namangan	Bishkek	Cairo
Navoi	Chelyabinsk	Delhi
Nukus	Ekaterinburg	Frankfurt
Samarkand	Kazan	Istanbul
Tashkent	Krasnoyarsk	Kuala Lumpur
Termez	Kiev	London
Urgench	Krasnodar	Milan
	Mineralnye Vody	New York
	Moscow	Osaka
	Novosibirsk	Paris
	Omsk	Riga
	Rostov	Roma
	Samara	Seoul
	St. Petersburg	Sharjan
	Simferopol	Tel Aviv
	Ufa	Urumqi
	Tyumen	





### III. Tajikistan international air routes

International Flights		
Airport:	Destinations:	Flights per week:
Dushanbe International Airport	<b>CIS Flights:</b>	
	Dushanbe - Moscow, Russia	14
	Dushanbe - Samara, Russia	3
	Dushanbe - Ekaterinburg, Russia	3
	Dushanbe - Almaty, Kazakhstan	3
	Dushanbe - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	2
	Dushanbe - Ufa, Russia, Republic of Tatarstan	1
	Dushanbe - St. Petersburg, Russia	1
	Dushanbe - Kazan, Russia, Republic of Tatarstan	1
	Dushanbe - Orenburg, Russia	1
	Dushanbe - Novosibirsk, Russia	1
	Dushanbe - Perm, Russia	1
	Dushanbe - Krasnoyarsk, Russia	1
	Dushanbe - Chelabinsk, Russia	1
	<b>International Flights:</b>	
	Dushanbe - Istanbul	3
	Dushanbe - Urumchi, China	1
	Dushanbe - Munich, Germany	1
Dushanbe - Tehran, Iran	1	
Dushanbe - Meshhed, Iran	1	
Dushanbe - Delhi, India	1	
Dushanbe - Shardjah, UAE	1	
Khudzhand International Airport	Khudzhand - Moscow, Russia	
	Khudzhand - Ekaterinburg, Russia	
	Khudzhand - Almaty, Kazakhstan	
	Khudzhand - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	
	Khudzhand - Novosibirsk, Russia	
	Khudzhand - Meshhed, Iran	
Kulyab Airport	Kulyab - Moscow, Russia	2
Kurgan-Tyube Airport	Kurgan-Tyube - Almaty, Kazakhstan	
	Kurgan-Tyube - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	

#### IV. Reported railway seizures in Uzbekistan, 2011

Drug	Amount (in kg)	Seizure location	Origin	Destination	Date	Remarks
Heroin	20.5	Inland (Tashkent-tovornaya)	Tajikistan	Russian Federation	21-May	Hidden in a secret compartment, collusion by employee
Heroin	9.5	Karakalpakiya Zheleznodorizhnyy checkpoint	Kulob	Moscow	6-Jul	Hidden with magnets under carriage – suspicion of collusion by employees
Heroin	8	n/a	Kulob	Moscow	19-Jul	1 Underneath carriage of Passenger train
Heroin	10				19-Jul	Underneath tank wagon of freight train Hoshadi-Amuzang
Heroin	6	n/a	Kulob	Moscow	23-Jul	
Heroin	1.2		Kulob	Moscow	23-Jul	Border
Heroin	5	n/a	Dushanbe	Moscow	15-Aug	Freight train
Heroin	2.2	Amuzang railroad BCP Surxondaryo	n/a	n/a	23-Aug	Border
Heroin	8	Amuzang railroad BCP Surxondaryo	n/a	n/a	17-Sep	
Heroin	13	Amuzang railroad BCP Surxondaryo	n/a	n/a	18-Sep	
Heroin	5.2	n/a	Khujand	Kaunas (Lithuania)	26-Oct	Assisted by sniffer dogs-hidden under a carriage
Heroin	5	n/a	Khujand	Bekobod	26-Oct	Freight train
Heroin	14	n/a	Dushanbe	St-Petersburg	1-Nov	Hidden in a rail tank
Morphine	9	Bekobod checkpoint	Khujand	Bekobod	24-Sep	Freight train



## V. Selected opium seizures in Afghanistan, 2010-2011

Drug	Amount (in kg)	Province/ seizure location	Origin	Destination	Movement	Date
Opium	180	Arghandi Kabul city	Kabul	Kandahar	Kabul-South	Jun-11
Opium	3	Pul Charkhi	Nangarhar	Kabul	East-Kabul	Oct-11
Opium	0.8	Arghandi Kabul city	Kabul	Kandahar	Kabul-South	Jun-11
Opium	2 461	North: Balkh	n/a	n/a	n/a	Feb-11
Opium	800	North: Balkh	n/a	n/a	n/a	Jan-11
Opium	350	North: Andkoi district, Jawzjan/Faryab	n/a	n/a	n/a	Jan-11
Opium	204	North: Sheberghan city, Jawzan	n/a	n/a	n/a	Mar-11
Opium	255	North: Faryab, Daulatabad district	unknown	Balkh	West-North	Jan-11
Opium	583	North: Faryab Qaisar district	North (Balkh)	Hirat	North-West	Dec-10
Opium	34	North: Baghlan (Andarab district)	n/a	North	North-North	Jul-11
Opium	35	North (Balkh)	n/a	Kabul	North-Kabul	Feb-10
Opium	800	Central (Kabul)	North (Samangan)	Kabul	North to Kabul	Feb-11
Opium	248	Central (Parwan)	n/a	Kabul	North to Kabul	Jul-05
Opium	70	North (Jawzjan)	n/a	Kabul	North to Kabul	Jul-10
Opium	148.5	Central (Bamian)	n/a	Kabul	Central region to Kabul	Aug-11
Opium	142	South (Zabul)	Coming from Kabul thru Ghazni	South	Kabul to South	Sep-11
Opium	190	South (Kandahar)	Coming from Kabul	South	Kabul to South	Jul-11

## VI. Selected heroin seizures in Afghanistan, 2010-2011

Drug	Amount (in kg)	Province	Origin	Destination	Movement	Year
Morphine	8	Baghlan	Nangahar	Balkh (Mazar)	East to north	Nov 2011
Heroin	19	Baghlan (Pul-e-Khurm)	Jalalabad	n/a	East to north	May 2011
Heroin	9	(Badakhshan Keshem district)	Jalalabad	Badakhshan	East to north-east	Aug 2010
Heroin	109	(Kabul)	Kabul	Takhar province (Dash-i-Qala)	Kabul to North-east	N/A
Heroin	300	(Parwan)	n/a	n/a	na	Jan 2011
Heroin	18	(Kabul)	Nangahar	Hirat	East to west	Jun 2010
Heroin	24	(Surkhrod district, Nangarhar)	Nangarhar	Helmand	East to south	Aug 2011
Heroin	106	Badakhshan	Takhar	Badakhshan	North-east to North-east	Jan 2010
Heroin	20	(Takhar)	Badakhshan	Kabul	North to Kabul	Feb 2011